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- ☐ **CHARLES SCHWAB** [schwab.com]
- ☐ **PAYTRUST** [paytrust.com]
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- ☐ **INSWEB** [insweb.com]
- ☐ **CITI** [citibank.com]
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- ☐ **DIRECTADVICE.COM** [directadvice.com]
- ☐ **MORNINGSTAR CLEARFUTURE** [morningstar.com/cover/clearfuture.html]

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- ☐ **HYPNOTIC** [hypnotic.com]
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- ☐ **CAMERAPLANET.COM** [cameraplanet.com]
- ☐ **ALLTRUE** [alltrue.com]
- ☐ **Z.COM** [z.com]
- ☐ **MADE** [gettingitmade.com]

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- ☐ **XS 4_ ALL** [kickme.to/xs4all]

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- ☐ **AIN'T IT COOL NEWS** [aintitcool.com]
- ☐ **DARK HORIZONS** [darkhorizons.com]

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- ☐ **IFILM** [ifilm.com]
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- ☐ **Z.COM** [z.com]
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- ☐ **SHORTFEST** [shortfest.com]
- ☐ **ANYTHING THAT MOVES** [anythingthatmoves.net]

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- ☐ **ATOMFILMS** [atomfilms.com]
- ☐ **WILDBRAIN.COM** [wildbrain.com]
- ☐ **MEDIATRIP.COM** [mediatrip.com]

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- ☐ **SPRINT BROADBAND DIRECT** [sprintbroadband.com]
- ☐ **RICOCHET** [www.ricochet.com]
- ☐ **DIRECPC** [www.direcpc.com]
- ☐ **STARBAND** [starband.com]
- ☐ **DSLREPORTS** [dslreports.com]
- ☐ **@WORK** [work.home.net]
- ☐ **ZONEALARM** [zonelabs.com]
- ☐ **LOUSDAY** [dolinar.com]
- ☐ **PC MAGAZINE'S NETPERSEC** [zdnet.com/downloads/stories/info/0,,00IDUV,.html]
- ☐ **CNET: BANDWIDTH METER** [webservices.cnet.com/bandwidth]
- ☐ **PC MAGAZINE: BROADBAND SPECIAL REPORT** [pcmag.com/broadband]

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- ☐ **INTERNET GEOGRAPHY PROJECT** [zooknic.com]
- ☐ **YAHOO! GET LOCAL** [local.yahoo.com]
- ☐ **EVA** [www.eva.org]
- ☐ **CITY OF ASHLAND** [ashland.or.us]
- ☐ **KLTZ/MIX-93 HOME PAGE** [kltz.com]
- ☐ **TOMBALL ONLINE** [tomballonline.com]
- ☐ **WINDHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE** [www.town.windham.nh.us]
- ☐ **WINDHAM INDEPENDENT WEB PAGE** [www.windhamnh.com/town]
- ☐ **MURRAYLINK** [www.murraylink.com]

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YAHOO! INTERNET LIVE: Today's best Net events [www.ylive.com]

FREEBIES, BARGAINS, AND CONTESTS: There is such a thing as a free lunch [www.freebargain.com]

INCREDIBLY USEFUL SITE OF THE DAY: Help the Web help you [www.incrediblyuseful.com]

DAILY DOUBLE DOWNLOAD: Playful and practical shareware daily [www.doubledownload.com]

ASK THE SURF GURU: You've got questions; he's got answers [www.surf-guru.com]

PRETTY STRANGE: Sites your mother warned you about [www.prettystrange.com]

YOUR YASTROLOGER: Your daily Net horoscope [www.yastrologer.com]

BACK ISSUES: Every edition of *Y-Life* since the beginning [www.yil.com/filters/toc/masterlist.html]

NET ESSENTIALS: The bookmarks you must have [www.yil.com/essentials]

IF A SITE WON'T LOAD, TRY TYPING WWW. BEFORE THE URL.

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- ☐ **NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & HERITAGE FESTIVAL** [insideneworleans.com/partners/nojazzfest]
- ☐ **OFFBEAT** [offbeat.com]
- ☐ **WWOZ** [wwoz.org]
- ☐ **TIPITINA'S** [tipitinas.com]
- ☐ **AMAZON.COM** [amazon.com]
- ☐ **NETFLIX** [netflix.com]
- ☐ **THE DIGITAL BITS** [thedigitalbits.com]
- ☐ **DVD EASTER EGGS** [dvdeastereggs.com/easter_eggs.html]
- ☐ **THE ULTIMATE LIST OF PRACTICAL JOKES** [www.lysator.liu.se/jokes/practical.html]
- ☐ **ROTTENEGGS** [rotteneggs.com]
- ☐ **GAGS AND PRANKS** [geocities.com/netsur24/gags.html]
- ☐ **THE IDIOSYNTACTIX CULTURE JAMMER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA** [www.syntac.net/hoax/index.php]

HEALTH & FITNESS (PAGES 116–117)

- ☐ **HEALTHOLOGY** [healthology.com]
- ☐ **MEDICONSULT: DERMATOLOGICAL HEALTH CENTER** [www.mediconsult.com/skin]
- ☐ **PREVENTION: SKIN CARE** [prevention.com/healing/skincare]
- ☐ **THE HEALTHY SKIN SHOP** [healthyskinshop.com]
- ☐ **YOGABASICS.COM** [yogabasics.com]
- ☐ **THE YOGA SITE** [yogasite.com]
- ☐ **BARBARA LUBOFF'S YOGA IN MEXICO** [yogainmexico.com]
- ☐ **YOGA TRAVEL** [www.yogatravel.com]
- ☐ **ONCOLOGY.COM** [oncology.com]
- ☐ **AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY** [cancer.org]
- ☐ **CANCERNET** [cancernet.nci.nih.gov]
- ☐ **CANCERCARE** [cancercare.org]
- ☐ **WEBMD HEALTH: MEMBER COMMUNITIES** [my.webmd.com/roundtable]

LIFESTYLE & COMMUNITY

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- ☐ **NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION** [nationalgardening.org]
- ☐ **ORGANIC GARDENING** [organicgardening.com]
- ☐ **THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC** [almanac.com]
- ☐ **URBAN AGRICULTURE NOTES** [cityfarmer.org]
- ☐ **GARDENSURF** [gardensurf.com]
- ☐ **PLANET OUT** [planetout.com]
- ☐ **MOGENIC** [mogenic.com]
- ☐ **THE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL INDULGENCE, INC.** [thesisters.org]
- ☐ **ASK DR. TRACY** [loveadvice.com]
- ☐ **THE ANSWER MAN** [theaman.com]
- ☐ **SALON.COM: GARRISON KEILLOR** [salon.com/directory/topics/garrison_keillor]
- ☐ **EVERYBODY'S UNCLE** [everybodysuncle.com]
- ☐ **MISS ABIGAIL'S TIME WARP ADVICE** [missabigail.com]

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- ☐ **THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW** [valley.vcdh.virginia.edu]
- ☐ **BENTONVILLE BATTLEGROUND** [www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/bentonvi/bentonvi.htm]
- ☐ **AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVES: AN ONLINE ANTHOLOGY** [xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html]
- ☐ **WHITMAN'S DRUM TAPS AND WASHINGTON'S CIVIL WAR HOSPITALS** [xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/hospital/whitman.htm]
- ☐ **SCRAAL: SEATTLE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW OF ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE** [scraal.com]
- ☐ **VOICES FROM THE GAPS: MAXINE HONG KINGSTON** [voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/maxinehongkingston.html]
- ☐ **IN THE HEART OF A PILIPINO AMERICAN: CARLOS BULOSAN** [stanford.edu/~jsangria/bulosan]
- ☐ **JHUMPA LAHIRI** [www.sawnet.org/books/jhumpa_lahiri.html]
- ☐ **MENSA INTERNATIONAL** [mensa.org]
- ☐ **HIGH IQ SOCIETY.COM** [highiqsociety.com]
- ☐ **THE IQUADRIVIUM SOCIETY** [s-2000.com/iquadrivium]
- ☐ **MEGA SOCIETY** [angelfire.com/ms/mega/OMSHP.html]

WEB USER

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- ☐ **SITELINK** [sitelink.net]
- ☐ **APPLE** [apple.com]
- ☐ **MACINSTRUCT** [macinstruct.com]
- ☐ **MACFIXIT** [macfixit.com]
- ☐ **CNET DOWNLOAD.COM** [download.com]
- ☐ **MACREVIEW** [macreview.com]
- ☐ **EPINIONS.COM** [epinions.com]
- ☐ **SPAM MIMIC** [spammimic.com]
- ☐ **ELECTRIFIER** [electrifier.com]

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- ☐ **IMICI MESSENGER** [imici.com]
- ☐ **THE ODIGO MESSENGER** [odigo.com]
- ☐ **CHEETACHAT** [cheetachat.com]
- ☐ **CHATSPACE** [chatspace.com]
- ☐ **AIM EXPRESS** [aol.com/aim/aimexpress.html]
- ☐ **OPTIONS COMPUTER SOFTWARE** [optionscomputer.com]

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- ☐ **IRFANVIEW** [studl.tuwien.ac.at/~e9227474]
- ☐ **SURFSECRET** [surfsecret.com]
- ☐ **WINDOWBLINDS** [stardock.com]

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- ☐ **YAHOO! BUSINESS EXPRESS HELP** [help.yahoo.com/help/bizex]
- ☐ **LOOKSMART: SUBMIT A SITE** [submit.looksmart.com]
- ☐ **NBCI** [nbci.com]
- ☐ **INKTOMI SEARCH/SUBMIT** [inktomi.com/products/portal/search/pagesubmission.html]
- ☐ **ALTAVISTA** [altavista.com]
- ☐ **DISAPPEARING INC.** [www.disappearing.com]
- ☐ **SAFEMESSAGE** [safemessage.com]
- ☐ **MSN: COMPUTING CENTRAL: BROADBAND** [computingcentral.msn.com/internet/broadband]
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- ☐ **EBAY** [ebay.com]
- ☐ **NETNOIR.COM** [netnoir.com]
- ☐ **SLASHDOT** [slashdot.org]
- ☐ **PLASTIC** [plastic.com]
- ☐ **EVERYTHING2** [everything2.com]
- ☐ **THE VINES NETWORK** [thevines.com]

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- ☐ **TELL ME...AM I HOT OR NOT?** [amihotornot.com]

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- ☐ **DIGITAL E-TAILER** [digitaletailer.com]
- ☐ **DEALTIME** [dealtime.com]
- ☐ **BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU** [bbb.org]
- ☐ **BBBONLINE** [bbbonline.org]
- ☐ **CANON U.S.A.** [www.usa.canon.com]
- ☐ **GÓMEZ.COM** [gomez.com]
- ☐ **BIZRATE.COM** [bizrate.com]

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- ☐ **THE MOSS PIT** [envy.nu/tmp]
- ☐ **WEBMD** [webmd.com]
- ☐ **LOVE & SEX** [chat.yahoo.com/c/events/info/2000/12/20/12000freeny.html]
- ☐ **THE DAGUERREIAN SOCIETY** [daguerre.org]

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- ☐ **THE NEW YORKER** [newyorker.com]
- ☐ **FEED** [feedmag.com]
- ☐ **BARNES&NOBLE.COM** [bn.com]
- ☐ **LIGHT HOUSE: CHURCH FOR THE DIGITAL GENERATION** [www.lighthousenet.org]
- ☐ **HZ.COM** [www.hz.com]
- ☐ **IMUNIFIED** [www.imunified.org]
- ☐ **F---ED COMPANY: EDGEWATER TRAGEDY FUND** [f---edcompany.com/edgewater.html]
- ☐ **FREEDOM WORKS** [freedom.house.gov]
- ☐ **EBAY** [ebay.com]
- ☐ **BATTLE.NET** [www.battle.net]
- ☐ **LIVE365.COM** [live365.com]
- ☐ **NOTHING** [nothingrecords.com]
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- ☐ **TOMGREEN.COM** [tomgreen.com]
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- ☐ **THE DOORS** [thedoors.com]

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- ☐ **BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART** [brooklynart.org]
- ☐ **ZONE3.ORG** [zone3.org]
- ☐ **SMALL TOWNS, BLACK LIVES** [blacktowns.org]
- ☐ **TOWN & COUNTRY** [townandcountrymovie.com]
- ☐ **THE UNOFFICIAL WARREN BEATTY FAN PAGE** [homestead.com/warrenbeattyfanpage/home.html]
- ☐ **...AND VOTE FOR WARREN BEATTY** [andvoteforwarrenbeatty.com]
- ☐ **BBC NEWSHOUR** [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/audio_news/newshour.shtml]
- ☐ **COVER TO COVER** [hollywoodbroadcasting.com]
- ☐ **REGGAE SOUNDS** [modernmusicandmore.com/specialty.html]
- ☐ **THE AVENGERS** [breaktv.com/pages/avg_show1.html]
- ☐ **GOTHAM GIRLS** [wb.com/pages/gothamgirls/home.jsp]
- ☐ **NO DOUBT RADIO** [radio.listen.com/features/nodoubt.html]
- ☐ **SPORTS TONIGHT** [cnn.com/chat]

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- ☐ **PURPLE SKIRT** [purpleskirt.com]

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- ☐ **ELUXURY** [eluxury.com]
- ☐ **NIKE GOLF** [nikegolf.com]
- ☐ **TITLEIST** [titleist.com]
- ☐ **THE SHARPER IMAGE** [sharperimage.com]

CLICK! HOME & OFFICE (PAGE 44)

- ☐ **SOUNDBITE** [soundbite.com]
- ☐ **STYLUSCENTRAL.COM** [styluscentral.com]
- ☐ **CLUB PHOTO** [clubphoto.com]
- ☐ **KODAK PHOTONET** [www.photonet.com]
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- ☐ **THE STATION** [station.sony.com]
- ☐ **GAMBIT STUDIOS LIBERTY EMULATOR** [gambitstudios.com/liberty.asp]
- ☐ **BATTLEMAIL** [www.battlemail.com]
- ☐ **FREEGAMES.ORG** [freegames.org]
- ☐ **GAMEFAQS** [gamefaqs.com]

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- ☐ **BARRY BONDS** [barrybondsdirect.com]

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- ☐ **NAKEDNEWS.COM** [nakednews.com]
- ☐ **MSNBC** [msnbc.com]

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- ☐ **YAHOO! CHAT** [chat.yahoo.com]
- ☐ **ZDNET DOWNLOADS** [hotfiles.com]
- ☐ **PALMGEAR H.Q.** [palmgear.com]
- ☐ **AMAZON.COM** [amazon.com]
- ☐ **SWITCHOUSE** [switchouse.com]
- ☐ **ATOMFILMS** [atomfilms.com]
- ☐ **HSX.COM: HOLLYWOOD STOCK EXCHANGE** [hsx.com]
- ☐ **LYCOS** [lycos.com]
- ☐ **NMC: NET MUSIC COUNTDOWN** [netmusiccountdown.com]
- ☐ **GRACENOTE** [gracenote.com]

COOL TOOLS (PAGES 65–66)

- ☐ **KENSINGTON** [kensington.com]
- ☐ **EMBLAZE SYSTEMS** [emblaze.com]
- ☐ **VIDEOCHIP TECHNOLOGIES** [videochip.com]
- ☐ **IOMEGA DIRECT** [iomegadirect.com]
- ☐ **LEGO STUDIOS** [lego.com/studios]
- ☐ **RICOH** [ricohzone.com]

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- ☐ **NATIONAL AIR DISASTER ALLIANCE/FOUNDATION** [planesafe.org]
- ☐ **ACCESS: AIRCRAFT CASUALTY EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES** [www.accesshelp.org]
- ☐ **AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL** [alpa.org]
- ☐ **THE ART LOSS REGISTER** [www.artloss.com]
- ☐ **NATIONAL MINORITY AIDS COUNCIL** [nmac.org]
- ☐ **NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN AIDS PREVENTION CENTER** [www.nnaapc.org]
- ☐ **ADDICTION SEARCH** [addictionsearch.com]
- ☐ **THE PET LOSS GRIEF SUPPORT WEBSITE** [petloss.com]

OLD WAY/NET WAY (PAGES 70–71)

- ☐ **AMERICAN RED CROSS** [redcross.org]
- ☐ **BEST VACUUM** [bestvac.com/vacuums.html]

INCREDIBLY USEFUL SITES

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- ☐ **DESIGN YOUR OWN ENGAGEMENT RING** [adiamondisforever.com/dyoer]
- ☐ **EXECUTIVEPLANET.COM** [executiveplanet.com]
- ☐ **CLICHÉSITE.COM** [clichesite.com]
- ☐ **OPENSECRETS.ORG** [opensecrets.org]
- ☐ **CHECKTHEGRID** [checkthegrid.com]
- ☐ **TRAVELCHUMS** [travelchums.com]
- ☐ **GE LIGHTING VIRTUAL HOUSE** [gelighting.com/na/virtualhouse]
- ☐ **STRONG NUMBERS** [strongnumbers.com]
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- ☐ **J&L FINANCIAL PLANNER 3.4** [home.earthlink.net/~jwoomer]

Y-LIFE INTERVIEW: WHERE THE IDEAS ARE

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- ☐ **LAZY ENTREPRENEUR** [dilbert.com/comics/dilbert/lazyentrepreneur]

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- ☐ **PICTOGRAMS** [home.swbell.net/pyg343/pictos]
- ☐ **THE ORPHANAGE OF CAST-OFF MASCOTS** [lileks.com/institute/orphanage]
- ☐ **PLAYCOW** [members.tripod.com/~jbarton]
- ☐ **THE MOTHER OF ALL EXCUSES PLACE** [madtbone.tripod.com]
- ☐ **THE SUMO WRESTLERS DRESSED UP AS THE SENSHI** [www.os.xaxon.ne.jp/~rini/sailor/sumo]

WEB GUIDE

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- ☐ **SONY STYLE: MUSICLUB** [musiclub.sonystyle.com]
- ☐ **FEED** [feedmag.com]
- ☐ **YACK.COM** [yack.com]
- ☐ **SCITECH DAILY REVIEW** [scitechdaily.com]
- ☐ **FRACTAL MUSIC** [thinks.com/webguide/fractal-music.htm]
- ☐ **THE MERCK MANUAL HOME EDITION** [merckhomeedition.com]
- ☐ **GEOCACHING** [geocaching.com]
- ☐ **FIELDING'S DANGERFINDER** [comebackalive.com/df/dplaces.htm]
- ☐ **CONSUMER EDUCATION FOR TEENS** [www.wa.gov/ago/youth]
- ☐ **STUDY GUIDES AND STRATEGIES** [iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides]
- ☐ **SLOW** [www.slowfood.com/food]
- ☐ **TAQUITOS.NET** [taquitos.net]
- ☐ **LEGO STAR WARS TRILOGY** [www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~mbsf]
- ☐ **THE ILLUSTRATED BEOWULF** [people.cornell.edu/pages/jbwl7/beowulf]
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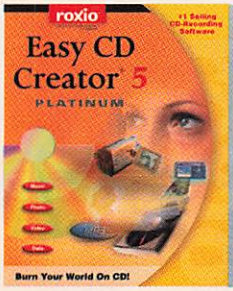

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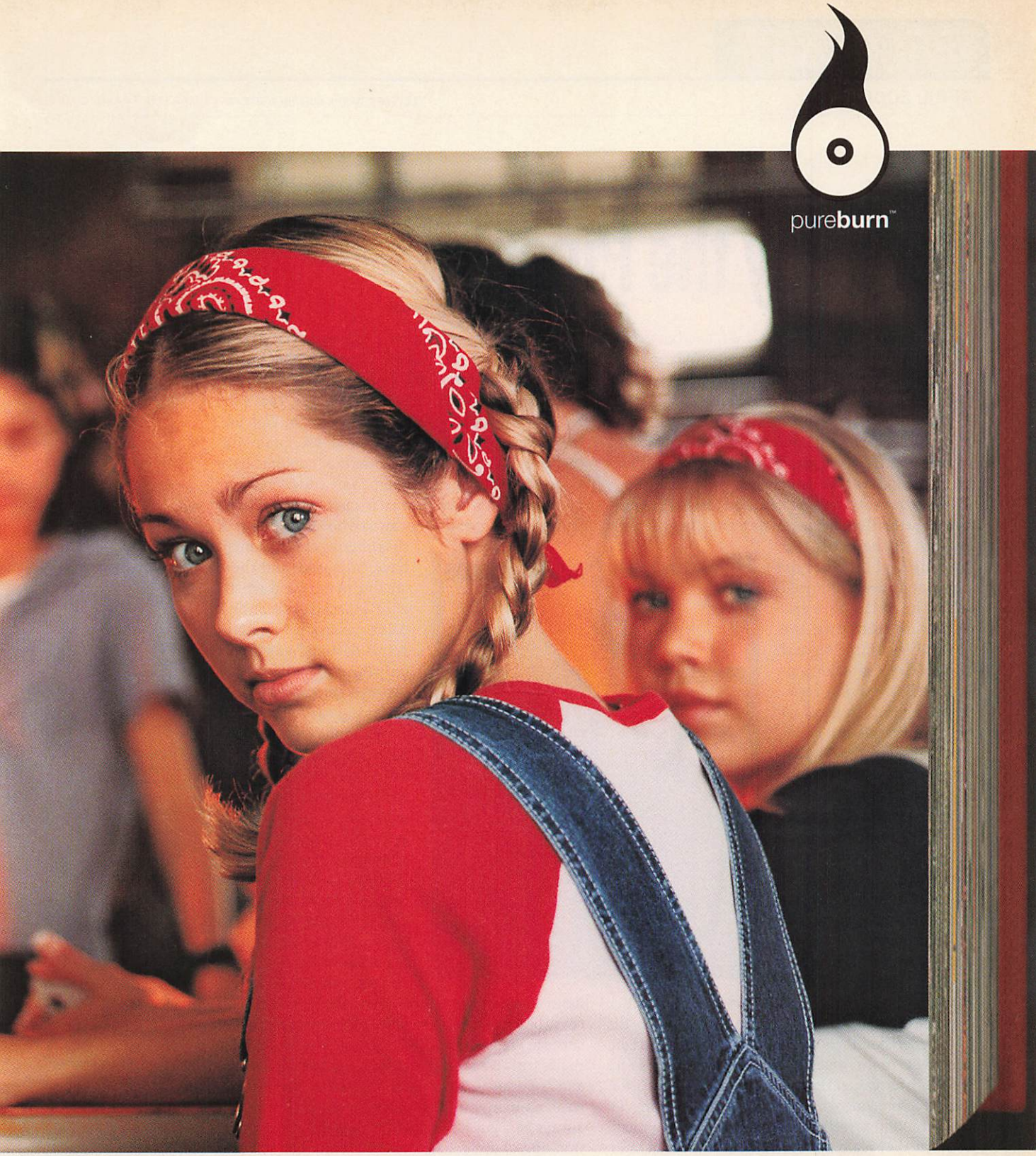

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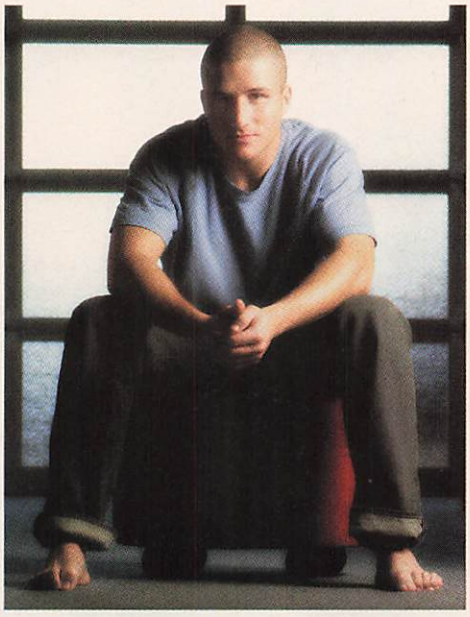
Let's Pay the Piper

AS I WRITE THIS, A FEDERAL APPEALS COURT HAS ruled that Napster is indeed breaching copyright (though it won't have to close down just yet), and I recently got the Anna Kournikova "picture" virus from a friend. As most of the world knows by now, that was the clever little bug that burrowed into my friend's address book, along with countless millions of others, and sent itself out to everyone listed.

The two events seem related in my mind. The massive Napster file-sharing phenomenon has been the symbol of the get-it-for-nothing Web, the deeply ingrained idea, inherited from the early hackers' shareware ethos, that the best things online should be free. Viruses are the symbol—hell, the living, replicating embodiment—of the idea that at any given moment, someone who likes to fool around with software is probably inventing a way *to get around something.* It could be a bright invention or a stroke of mischief, but it amounts to the same thing: On the Web, where there's a wall, there's a way around it—and the way is usually going to be devised by someone like Napster's Shawn Fanning (shown at right) with time on his hands.



When our staff met to discuss the implications of the Napster decision, there was a lot of talk about copyright, who owns music, and whether the Web will end up with both for-pay and for-free segments, like television today. As someone who spent a few years editing *TV Guide,* I found myself thinking about the two mediums: Are they really similar? When HBO began offering uncut movies, people found something they couldn't match elsewhere on the tube and began to sign up. Even then, it took more than 10 years for a majority of viewers to find enough value in cable to pay for it.

On the Web, where the "channels" are infinite and everyone gets to create content, you surf differently from the way you channel surf: If asked to pay for something online, you immediately wonder if you can match it elsewhere. There's always another portal, another news source, another fun site a click away. They may not be as good, but they're free. That's the reason why, after five years of mainstream Web use, there's very little movement toward subscription surfing. Only a handful of sites offering "content" have signed up enough subscribers to be considered successful. (*The Wall Street Journal* is one; *Consumer Reports* Online is a nonprofit anyway, so who knows?) Lots of sites offering entertainment have collapsed, and there are fine literary and artistic efforts that struggle online. Advertising on the Net seems destined to support only the biggest players, or very specific niches.

Having said all that, it seems to me that we Web users are going to have to drop specious arguments about "sharing" copyrighted work among ourselves and agree that creators of entertainment—music, movies, literature—deserve to be paid. Somehow. But we can also agree that it's going to be up to them—the studios, the creators themselves—to come up with simple, economical ways for us to enjoy that entertainment. That could be in the form of micropayments that are as universal as credit cards in the offline world, or a Napster that is truly easy to use, universal, professionally run, and as cheap as $5 a month. Otherwise...well, otherwise, no matter how many court decisions, there'll always be a guy sitting in a dorm room somewhere, thinking, "I can get around that," who then starts to tap...tap...tap at his keyboard.

Barry Golson

Barry Golson, Editor in Chief

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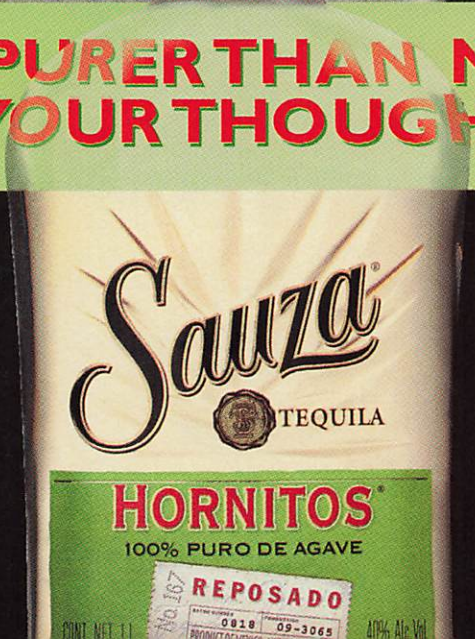

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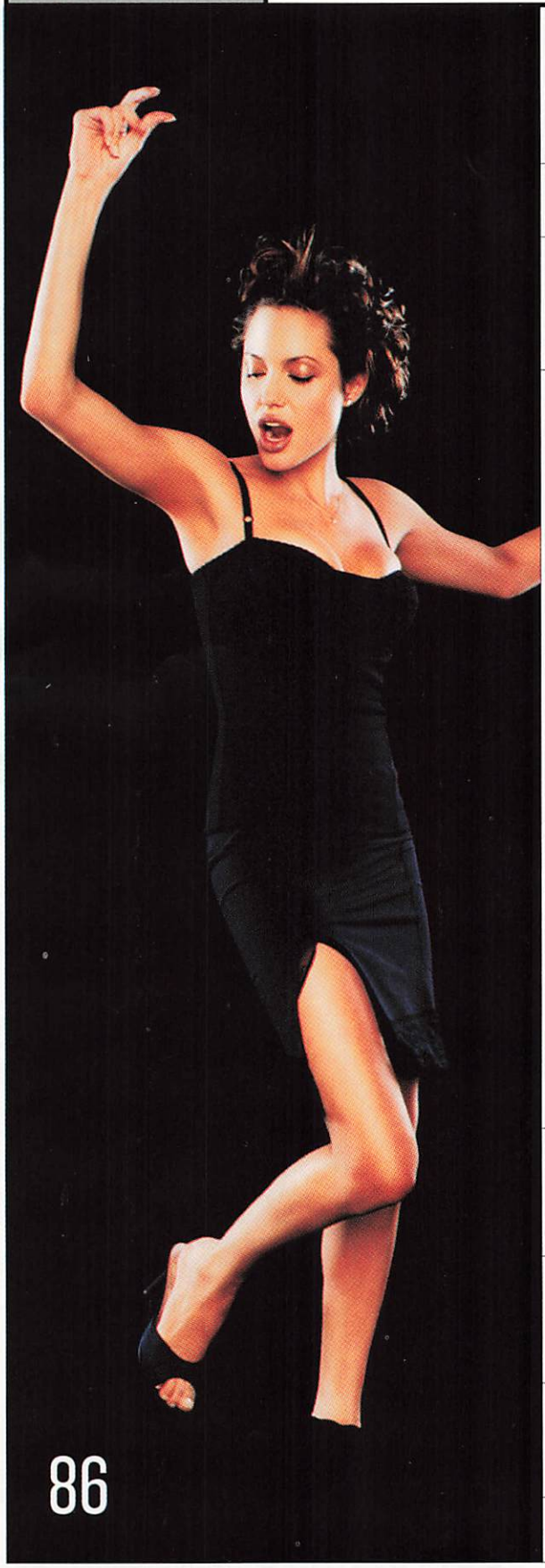

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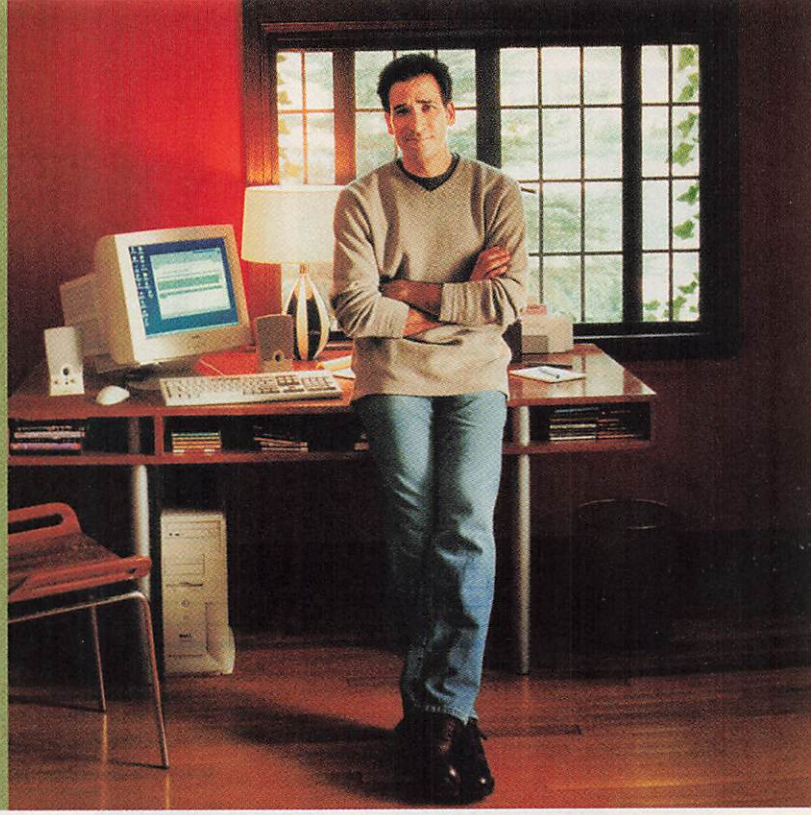

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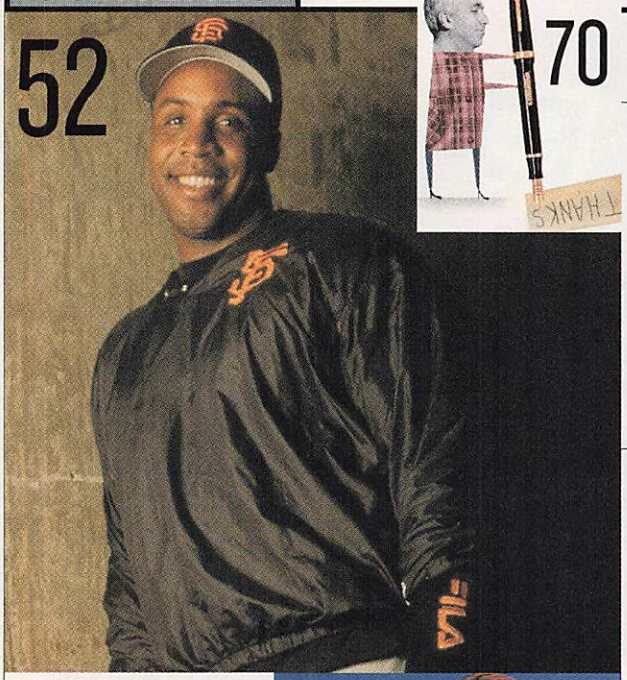

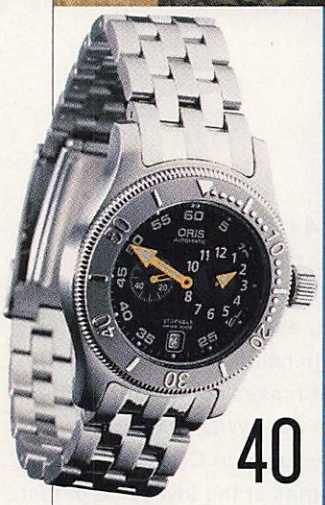

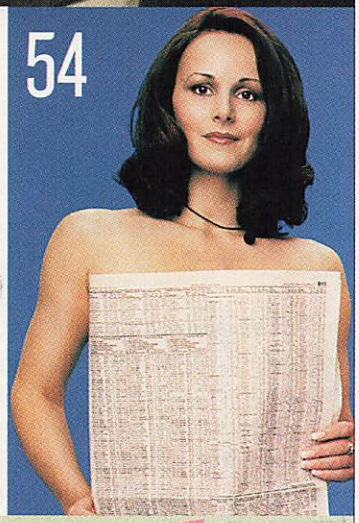

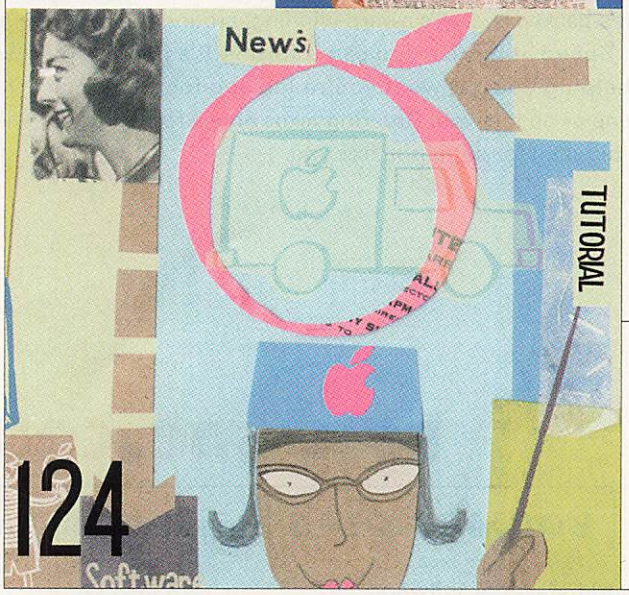

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DAILY FEATURE

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The expanded online edition of our fourth annual survey includes data on the top 100 schools in each of four categories -- everything from local community colleges to huge state universities. It's required reading for prospectives and alumni alike. You'll also find our picks for the top 10 college sites and a report on use and abuse of bandwidth on campus.

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SURF GURU tip of the day — How do I back up my favorites list in Explorer?

DOWNLOADS two a day — Get a more powerful and secure version of Explorer

FORWARD today's joke — Bill and Boris, together again virtually

USEFUL site of the day — Try a whole new look without leaving your PC

NET RADIO today's tunes — Germany's home of 80's and 90's lite rock

STRANGE what the #@!%? — Gandhi's fun-loving site awards homepage

LIVE EVENTS chats and more — Big-beat DJ Fatboy Slim, UNLV coach Billy Banyo, more

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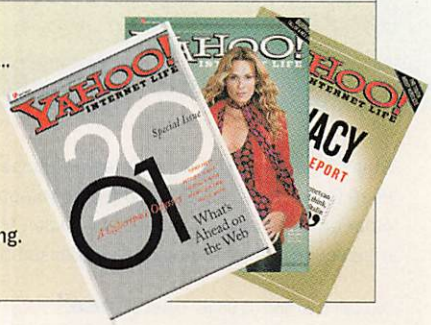

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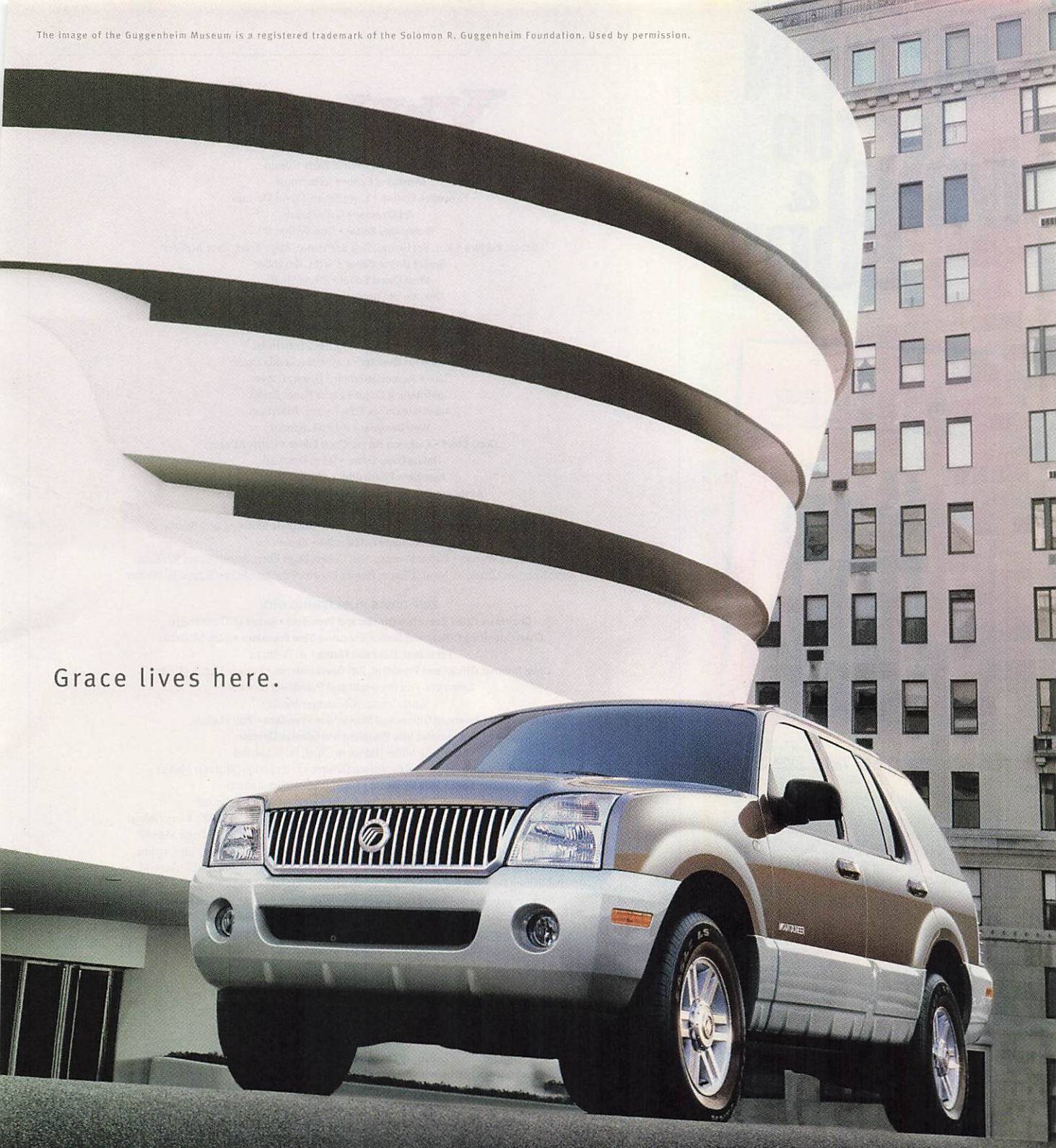

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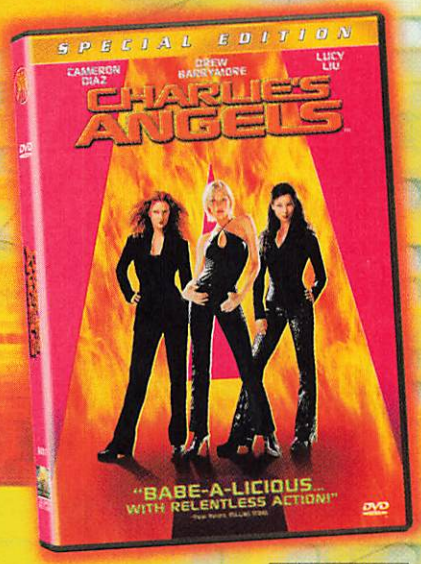

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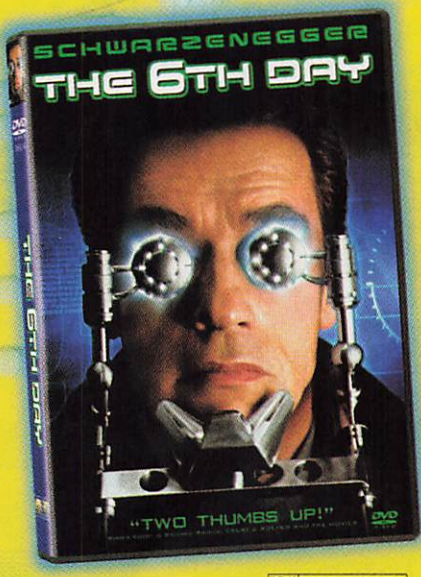

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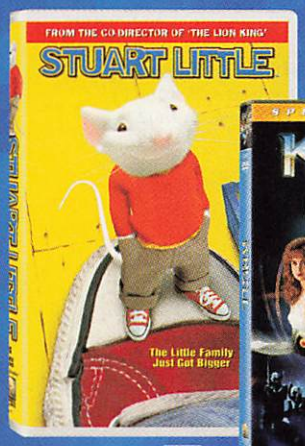

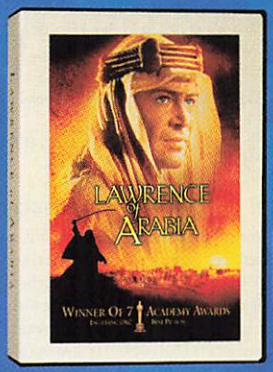

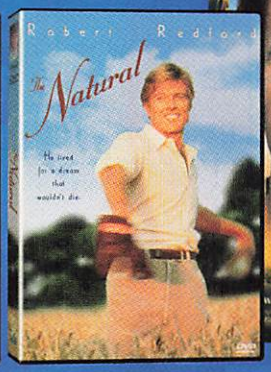

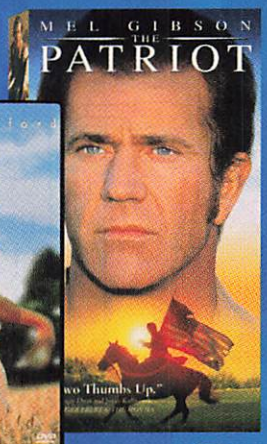

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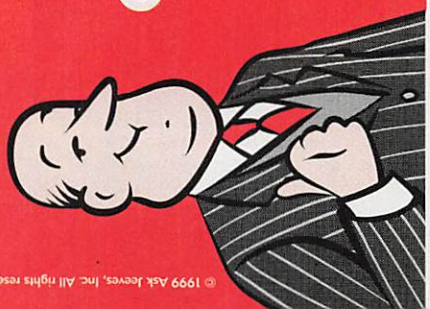

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MONICA, OUT OF THE BAG

Our Monica Lewinsky cover story ["Oh! The Places You'll Go," February '01, page 94] energized our readership in a way not seen since we added the hole-punch helpers on our Site Address Guide. Here's some of what you had to say, and our responses:

Your February 2001 issue featured Monica Lewinsky and her online business—complete with photos of both Lewinsky and some purely awful pocketbooks—but in Click! News [page 40] you label the Wells Fargo building climber's act a "dubious deed" and tout the fact that you won't publish his Internet address. Why? Because, you say, he caused a public-safety emergency and cost the city thousands of dollars. That may be true, but what about Lewinsky's dubious deed—you know, the one that made her famous enough to get in your magazine—which cost the entire country much, much more?

—Al Santangelo:
@bestweb.net

>>*Okay, but let's leave the bags out of this....*<<

Finding a courtesan on the cover of my *Y-Life* magazine made me grimace, but I wasn't upset until I read the article. She's displayed less courage and willingness to take risks than numerous others who've set up Web sites to sell merchandise that you might have written about.

Throughout history, men in power have had courtesans whom they discarded when it was convenient for them. This young woman is no more, nor less, than that, and while I tolerate her presence in social magazines, I find your inclusion of her distracting. We don't need you to choose our "heroines" for us, nor to give us slanted stories about particular entrepreneurs.

—Anna Vorhes Augustana:
@inst.augie.edu

>>*Sorry for the distraction, but we often cover Web entrepreneurs....*<<

Just when I thought about canceling my subscription, you interview Monica. I am so glad she hasn't become a hermit from the public. Now I'm wondering—are there shares in her company? All the best, Monica.

—A READER:
@hotmail.com

>>*Can we interest you in a handbag or two?...*<<

I recently received my first issue of *Yahoo! Internet Life*. I was looking forward to a magazine that would show me some of the things I may be missing on the Net. I was disgusted to see that the best thing you could find to grace your cover was a photo of Monica Lewinsky. This woman has polluted our media with her airheaded comments and self-promotion. In an earlier day she would have been considered a slut. I say keep moving on, Monica—this is one American who has heard quite enough.

—A READER:
@aol.com

>>*But sluts don't accessorize this well.* **—Ed.**<<

HATS OFF

"The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Palm" [February '01, page 98] was the best article I've read in months, online or offline! Congrats!

—Ben Stein:
@cornell.edu

READY TO RELOCATE

I have been waiting for a cell phone that is as capable as a Palm/Pocket organizer, and I found it in your February 2001 issue ["Web to Go," page 86]. I enjoy my Nokia 6160 but would love to get my hands on the new Nokia 9210. Nokia's Web site said the phone is available only in Europe and Africa. When can we expect it in the States?

—Joel C. Moore:
@aol.com

>>*Those lucky Europeans. They always seem to get the coolest cell phones first. Nokia still won't commit to a date for U.S. availability of the sleek 9210, so our best advice is: Keep an eye on its Web site.* **—Ed.**<<

TRAVEL BUY-BUY

Apparently Savvio.com wasn't too savvy in its business plan in giving bargain hunters cheap airfare [Travel & Recreation, January '01, page 139]. The Web site has shut down its e-commerce area in less than one month. Please verify that sites are up and running before giving praise.

—Keith Carey:
@charm.net

>>*Though we double-check every Web site in the magazine right up until press time, occasionally sites do go down between the printer and the newsstand.* **—Ed.**<<

RADIO GIVE-GIVE

As a former Philadelphia-area resident, I was excited to see my favorite radio station, WXPN 88.5FM, or **XPN.ORG [publicbroadcast.net/wxpn.ppr]**, featured in your "10 Net Radio Stations No Browser Should Be Without" list ["Radio Gaga," February '01, page 110]. You would have done WXPN a service if you had told your readers that it is listener-supported.

—Jennifer Donatelli:
@worldnet.att.net

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SITE GAG

BY MICK STEVENS

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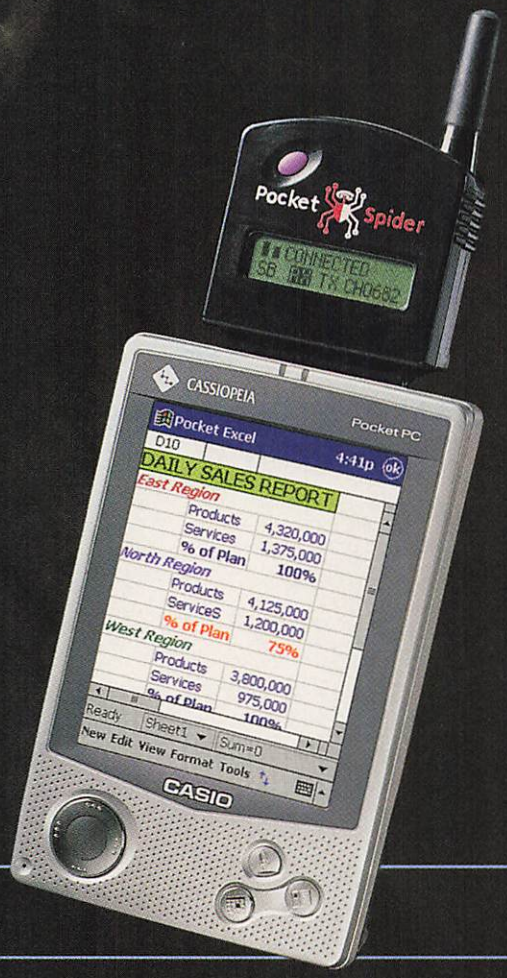

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1. Maximum data transfer rate dependent upon variables, including particular modems with which you are communicating, telephone lines, communications software and communications protocols.
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Solo 9500CL

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So your customers come back to buy again.

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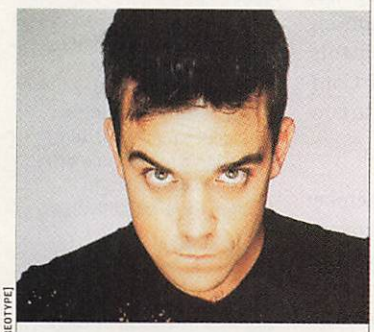
PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TRENDS ON THE NET 04.01

EDITED BY RON BEL BRUNO

NETOBSESSIONS



ROBBIE WILLIAMS

With more than 60 Yahoo! clubs and two Web rings, this British boy-band refugee lives up to the message of his latest recording effort, "Sing When You're Winning." Start @ **ROBBIE WILLIAMS FANBASE** [clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/robbiewilliamsfanbase]

CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

Moss's fan sites pack enough heroine worship and script speculation to keep fans busy till next year's *Matrix* sequel. Start @ **THE MOSS PIT** [envy.nu/tmp]

ADVICE

Guidance replaces gossip online, with **WEBMD** [webmd.com] counselors Michael Freeny and Pepper Schwartz beating out celebs in Yahoo! Chats attendance. Start @ **LOVE & SEX** [chat.yahoo.com/c/events/info/2000/12/20/122000freeny.html]

WILLIAMS: JASON BELL/KATZ/CPI; MOSS: PATRICIA DE LA ROSA/CORBIS OUTLINE; *TWO MEN BRAWLING*: FROM THE COLLECTION OF MARK KOENIGSBERG [WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/~DAGUERREOTYPE]

memorable site

Daguerre Revisited

WILL DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS SOON MAKE printed snapshots seem quaint? In the 1860s, similarly, paper photos consigned their predecessors—daguerreotypes printed on metal plates—to artifact status. At **THE DAGUERREIAN SOCIETY** [daguerre.org], learn how Frenchman Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre developed the world's first photographic system and browse vintage images such as *Two Men Brawling*, above. Better yet, take in the contemporary gallery to discover an art form undergoing a surprising renaissance. —M.G.

VISIT *Y-LIFE*'S ARCHIVE OF MEMORABLE SITES AT YIL.COM/MEMORABLE.

THE CLICK CLIQUE: WARREN CHRISTOPHER, BILGE EBIRI, MEGAN GERRITY, LYNN GINSBURG, MEAGHAN O'NEILL, JOSH ROBERTSON, MARC SALTZMAN, ALAN SCHWARZ, TY WENGER. WRITE TO CLICK@ZIFFDAVIS.COM. READERS ONLY, PLEASE!

Eustace Tilly Logs On

A journalistic institution's online debut is the talk of the town, the Vatican contemplates a Net saint, and AOL won't play with others

WEB SATIRISTS LOST AN EASY TARGET MIDWINTER, when **THE NEW YORKER** [newyorker.com] finally ventured online—three years ahead of **FEED** [feedmag.com] editors' most optimistic predictions. The site showcases *New Yorker* departments, such as Talk of the Town and those famous cartoons, alongside original content.

And what of those jokes about the magazine's belated arrival on the Web? "We got a big chuckle out of it," says spokesperson Perri Dorset. But as the pundits chuckled, the magazine's new e-book imprint was rolling out three mini-anthologies of previously published *New Yorker* articles, all for Microsoft Reader, at **BARNES&NOBLE.COM** [bn.com]: *First Stories, The Price of Everything,* and *In Sickness and In Health.* Not to be outdone, B&N itself has opened Barnes & Noble Digital, which will offer e-books selling for less than the printed editions, typically between $5.95 and $7.95. Its first original e-book, due this spring, is Dean Koontz's *The Book of Counted Sorrows.*

DECEIT AT DAVOS Online shopping, taxes, and the digital divide, among other hot-button Net topics, were on the table at this winter's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. In attendance were Bill Gates, Napster CEO Hank Barry, Cisco Systems CEO John T. Chambers, and Michael Dell, CEO of Dell Computer, as well as Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. While these VIPs discussed the fate of the Web, hackers with an antiglobalization agenda were snagging the credit card numbers (among other personal data) of 1,400 forum participants. The hack was reportedly executed via some Compaq Ipaq pocket PCs provided free of charge to conference delegates.

HEAVENLY CONNECTIONS Can't remember the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse? Now anyone with a WAP-enabled cell phone or a two-way pager has wireless Bible access, thanks to a partnership between **LIGHT HOUSE: CHURCH FOR THE DIGITAL GENERATION** [www.lighthousenet.org] and **HZ.COM**, a wireless information provider. E-mail hz@hz.com with the message "Bible Revelation 6:8," and within minutes "Behold, a pale horse: And he that sat upon him, his name was Death" will appear on-screen. On the heels of this news, the Vatican announced that Pope John Paul II may give the nod to Saint Isidore, a seventh-century archbishop of Seville, as patron saint of the Net. Saint Isidore wrote the vast *Etymologiae*, an early encyclopedia.

BUDDY LIST BROUHAHA Messenger 4, the fourth generation of Microsoft's instant-messaging software, lets its users chat with Yahoo! Messenger surfers. However, thanks to America Online's continued shielding of its users from other systems, they won't be able to chew the fat with their Microsoft- and Yahoo!-based friends. Those two services report 10.3 million and 10.6 million users, respectively—not quite as many users as the combined 30.6 million on AOL's AIM and ICQ systems, but their ranks are growing rapidly. AOL, thus far, has been unwilling to work with **IMUNIFIED** [www.imunified.org], of which MSN and Yahoo! are members. —M.G.

quotables

"This is warfare on the cheap, and very easy to activate."

—**YONAH ALEXANDER**, head of the International Center for Terrorism Studies, discussing Osama bin Laden's forces' use of public Web sites to plan terrorist activities

"I just want my music to be out, and that's always been the main priority."

—**BILLY ARMSTRONG**, of the band Green Day, supporting free music on Napster

"If you can afford...a computer, you can afford to pay $16 for my... CD."

—**EMINEM**, weighing in against Napster

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FILE THIS

For the past couple of years, the IRS has touted its "electronic" tax-filing system—though surfers had to sign and snail-mail a form to make it all legal. This year, truly paperless filing debuts. We haven't been this excited since...well, perhaps *excited* isn't the word we're looking for.

GOT A SAVE OR DELETE? VISIT **YIL.COM/SD** TO POST PRAISE OR CRITICISM.

REVENGE OF THE NERDS

A group of self-dubbed Urban Girls started Geek Boy Services to help rich Bay Area dot-com types get a wardrobe and a nightlife. Soon after, the fashion-challenged boys fought back with Geek Girl Services: "You pay us $300. We'll help you stop caring about how you dress, understand basic geek-speak, play Quake, and debug."

THE ENFANT TERRIBLE HAS A HEART

Dot-com dead-pool meister Philip Kaplan may delight in the demise of the e-economy, but don't say he's ever danced on any graves. When Kaplan heard of the Edgewater Technology homicides in Massachusetts, he started a memorial fund [**f---edcompany.com/edgewater.html**]. As of mid-January, Kaplan had raised more than $16,000.

DASHING RESCUE

The late Toysmart had promised never to share customer data with a third party. So when the cash-starved company suddenly put its list on the market, privacy watchdog group TRUSTe blew the whistle. Disney (which owned 60 percent of Toysmart) came riding in like the cavalry, paying its own business partner $50,000 to delete the entire database.

ARMEY OF DARKNESS?

We've slammed Rep. Dick Armey, R-Texas, for supporting filtering software. But according to his site, **FREEDOM WORKS** [**freedom.house.gov**], he opposes Carnivore, the FBI's super-scary snooping program. Consider the label "clueless Dick" provisionally lifted.

PORTAPAM: The VIP, anywhere you want her.

Delete!

...AND DUBIOUS DEEDS

SOLD...DOWN THE RIVER

Online auction giant **EBAY** [**ebay.com**] recently discovered a glitch in its registration process. The result: It unintentionally signed up 6 million customers to receive marketing pitches (from the auction site itself). Mistakes do happen, but eBay just let it be. Now tens of millions of e-mails are being sent to unwilling recipients.

IT'S STUPID SOFTWARE, STUPID

Under the recently passed Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), all public schools and libraries must install filtering software on all computers to which kids have access. How many times can we say this? Except for the youngest children, it's a tremendous step backward. A librarian or a teacher—not a computer algorithm—should be deciding what texts belong in a library or classroom. Do we even need to cite examples of what could get banned? *Moby Dick, Puss in Boots, The Naked Ape,* and Studs Terkel's *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression.*

UP NEXT: PORTATOMMY

First, Eruptor brought us PortaKitty and PortaMonkey—virtual pets you feed and care for on your palmtop. Then there were PortaPimp and PortaHo. Okay, those were kinda funny. Now there's PortaPam—the virtual Pamela Anderson. Send her to the gym, feed her pizza, shower her with gifts....If this appeals to you, "Get out of the house more often" should appear first on your to-do list.

CYBERPUNKS 1, DEVIL 0

For many of the top Diablo II players, January 1, 2001, was doomsday—but not because of any Y2K+1 virus. No, their pain was caused by something much more mundane: hackers who broke into Blizzard Entertainment's **BATTLE.NET** server and started killing off the most accomplished alter egos. Only in cyberspace could an antisocial kid with a modem take down an 80th-level barbarian. —**J.R.**

PEOPLE BRIEFS/04.01

NAILED Trent Reznor, the man behind Nine Inch Nails and Nothing Records, has launched a Web radio station at **LIVE365.COM**. Surfers can also tune in to the station, which features six playlists of the label's artists, at the Nothing Records site, **NOTHING** [nothingrecords.com]....**TOMFOOLERY** Envelope-pushing comedian Tom Green is bringing his often off-putting antics over to **MEDIATRIP.COM**. Green has also relaunched **TOMGREEN.COM**.... **DAVY JOINS** Add David Bowie to the list of artists who've signed on with **MY.MP3** [my.mp3.com]. With this agreement, Bowie, one of the few major rockers who owns some of his own music copyrights, grants the site rights to stream those works....**BRITNEY SAYS** The princess of pop has a new hit on the Net. The R-rated "rap," captured by an open mike backstage at a concert in Brazil, features the F-word and Spears complaining about her too-short pants. The clip was an immediate hit on **NAPSTER** [napster.com] and several fan sites.... **NOT THE END** The remaining members of the Doors have cobbled together almost 30 hours of unreleased material to be available for sale on CD serially (and exclusively) at **THE DOORS** [thedoors.com]. —**M.G.**

COURTESY OF ERUPTOR ENTERTAINMENT

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MUSIC

Rejoice! Nick Cave, the lizardlike post-punk headcase-cum-rocker-cum-novelist, delivers his latest album, *No More Shall We Part*, this month. Though he's mellowed somewhat since the days of songs like "Scum" and "Your Funeral, My Trial," the Cave-man still inspires rabid devotion among his fans. While his official site apprises you of upcoming tour stops and other such essentials, **NICK CAVE ONLINE** [nick-cave.com] houses MP3s, Nick Cave PC wallpaper, lyrics, and a huge interview archive. There's also a copy of the letter he sent the MTV Music Awards in 1996, declining the nomination for Best Male Artist, wherein he disses the show as "this tumbrel—this bloody cart of severed heads and glittering prizes."

ABOVE: From *Black Love Series*.

ART

New York's **BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART** [brooklynart.org] hosts "Committed to the Image: Contemporary Black Photographers" at its official site through April 29. This exhibition showcases both up-and-coming and established African American photographers. Photography thrives all over the Web, with one of the more interesting sites being **ZONE3.ORG**, which is curated by acclaimed photographer E.A. Kennedy III and home to a small but beautiful gallery of African American photography. For more photographs relating to the black experience, try **SMALL TOWNS, BLACK LIVES** [blacktowns.org], an ongoing documentary project portraying life in several New Jersey communities.

FILM

After months of well-publicized delays and reshoots, *Town and Country*, a romantic comedy, finally hits theaters. Warren Beatty plays a womanizing (surprise) New York architect at a marital crossroads. Though there's no shortage of star power here (Garry Shandling, Diane Keaton, and Goldie Hawn—you know, Kate Hudson's mom), it's Warren's movie. Check out the trailer at the film's official site [townandcountrymovie.com] and see for yourself. Moving on, **THE UNOFFICIAL WARREN BEATTY FAN PAGE** [homestead.com/warrenbeattyfanpage/home.html] is home to biographical details, photos, and some questionable trivia. (He's allergic to oysters. Fascinating.) And remember, The Warren has at least as many supporters for his mythical presidential campaign as Ralph Nader had for his actual effort. Click to **...AND VOTE FOR WARREN BEATTY** [andvoteforwarrenbeatty.com] if you don't believe us. Problem is, the site, which consists of three posters, says nothing about Beatty's qualifications. But then again, this wouldn't be the first political campaign to do that. —B.E.

WHEREWHEN

CATCH IT LIVE

BBC NEWSHOUR
World news from a different viewpoint.
[www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/audio_news/newshour.shtml]
Daily 8 A.M. and 3 P.M., or on demand

COVER TO COVER
Book news, reviews, and interviews.
[hollywoodbroadcasting.com]
Thu 10 P.M.

REGGAE SOUNDS
Straight from...yes... Rochester, New York.
[modernmusicandmore.com/specialty.html]
Sat 4 P.M.

GET IT ANYTIME

THE AVENGERS
Steed and Peel flirt and fight through the '60s.
[breaktv.com/pages/avg_showl.html]
On demand

GOTHAM GIRLS
Batman's foes get a cartoon of their own.
[wb.com/pages/gothamgirls/home.jsp]
On demand

NO DOUBT RADIO
Gwen and the band spin their favorites.
[radio.listen.com/features/nodoubt.html]
On demand

GO CHAT

SPORTS TONIGHT
Rehash the day's hits and misses.
[cnn.com/chat]
Weekdays 11 P.M.

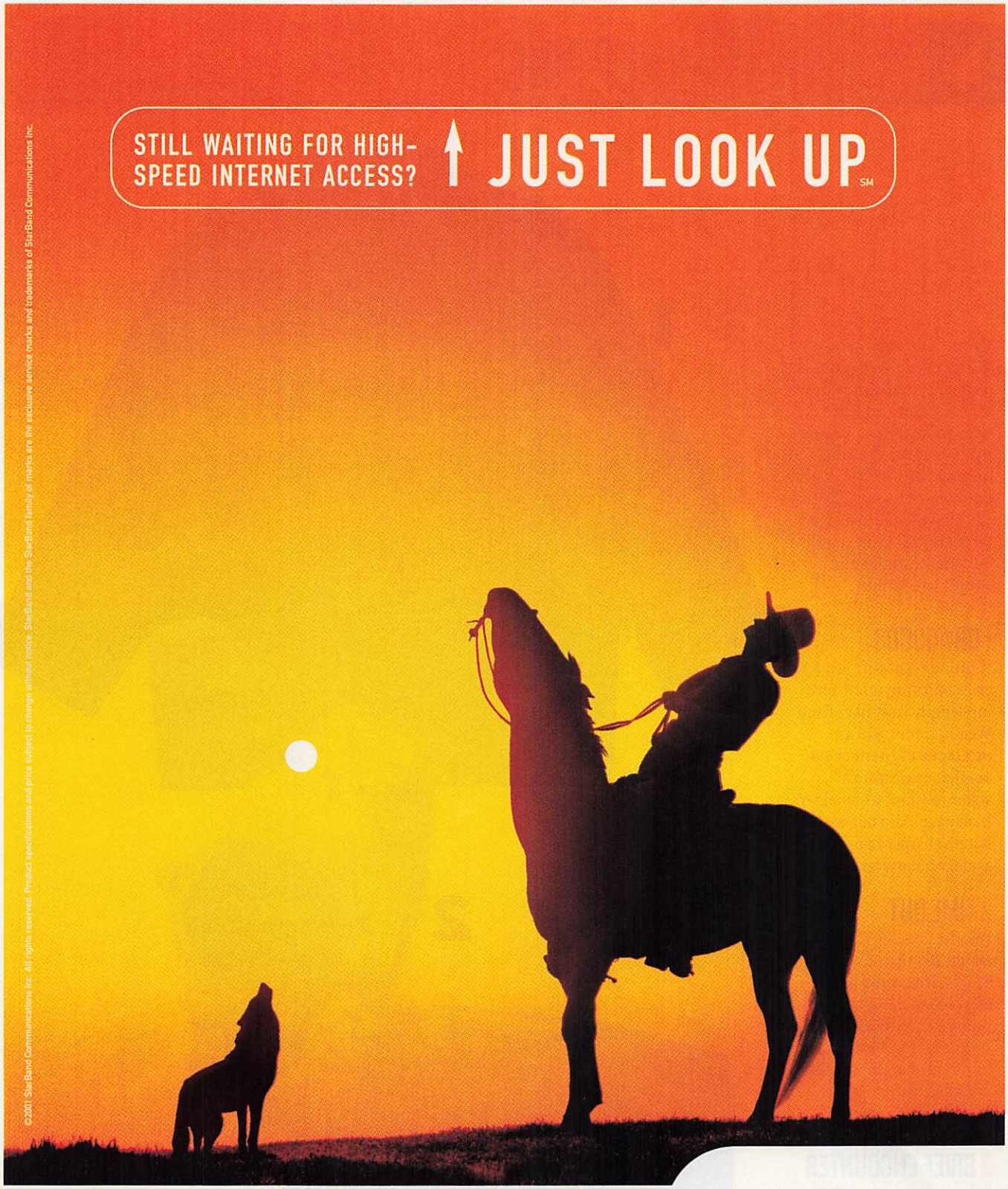
All times are Eastern.

overheard

"When I came to L.A., I was broke. I would skateboard to auditions or take the bus, where I was verbally assaulted many times."

—RYAN PHILLIPPE, Mr. Showbiz interview

DELPHINE A. FAWUNDO



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EDITED BY WARREN CHRISTOPHER

YOU CAN TRADE STOCKS from your Web-enabled phone, pinpoint your exact location on Earth with your GPS device, and listen to the latest tunes on your MP3 wristwatch, but none of these gadgets can stop the rain. No matter. With this gear, you'll be water-resistant and simply irresistible.

1 DRY GOODS

"Cutting edge" isn't just for electronics anymore. This hip-length must-have from Weatherproof, $75 at **NETJACKETS** [netjackets.com], is made from a water-resistant technofiber. It may act like a raincoat, but it's sharper than your average outerwear.

2 TIME OUT

Yes, the Oris Big Crown Divers Regulator watch, $1,225, from **ORIS** [www.oris-watch.com] is waterproof. But with its stainless-steel band and luminous hands, whose attention will be on the weather?

3 BRIEF ENCOUNTER

Soggy is not an option for your new laptop. But you won't think twice about swaddling your hard drive in Samsonite's Philippe Starck bag, $180 at **PURPLE SKIRT** [purpleskirt.com]. Reliable luggage never looked so good. —M.O.

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Bobby Jones 1930 Grand Slam golf clubs
$3,500 for the set [eluxury.com]
Nike Course Air Tour TW shoes
$140 [nikegolf.com]
Scotty Cameron Pro Platinum putter $275 [titleist.com]
Nike Precision Tour Accuracy ball
$45 per dozen [nikegolf.com]
Putt 'n' Hazard with break
$100 [sharperimage.com]

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Stylist: Vicky McGarry

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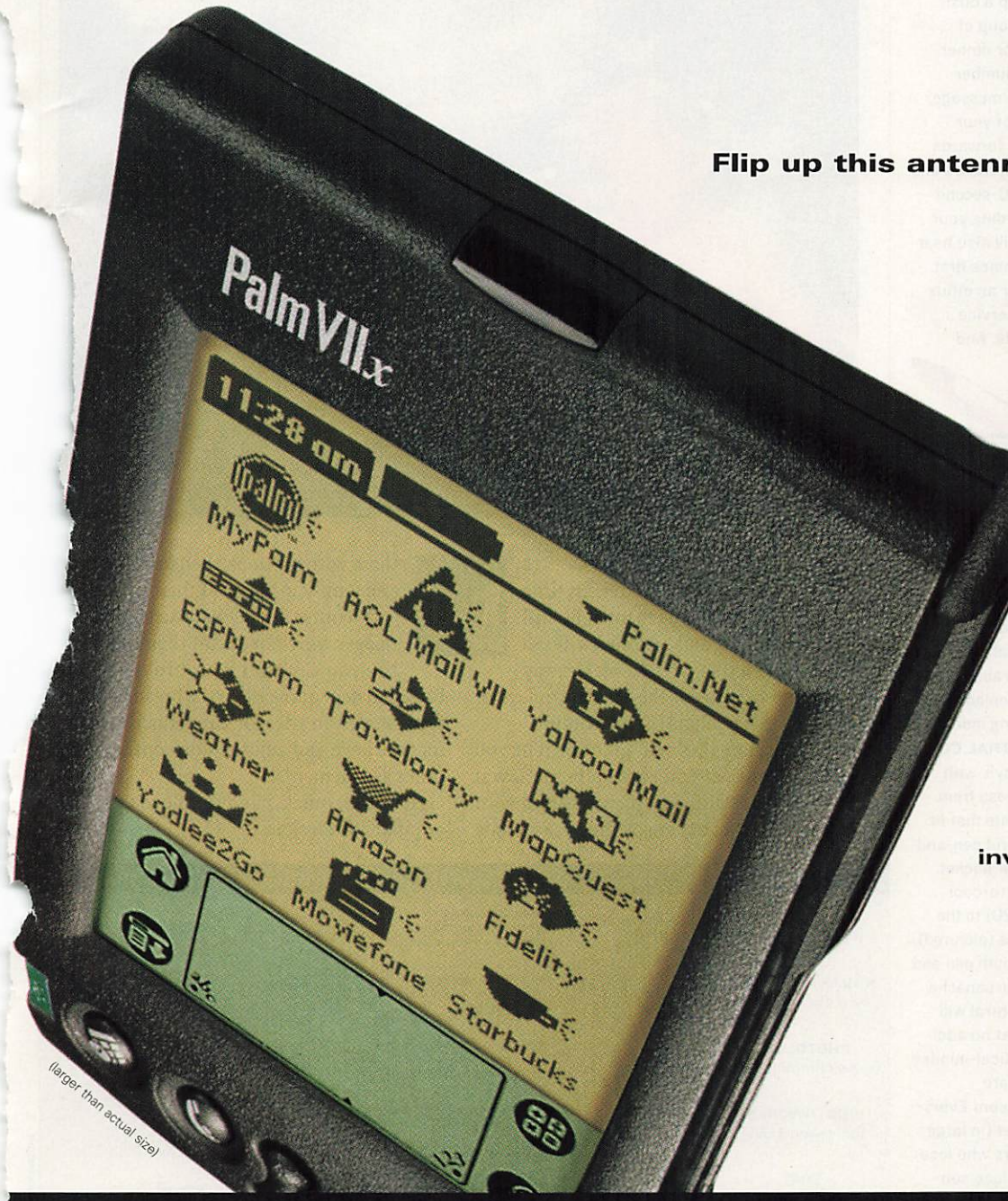

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NETSAVERS

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E-mail lets you send a message to as many people as you'd like simultaneously. Now **SOUNDBITE** [soundbite.com] lets you do the same with telephone calls—whether it's to set up a business meeting or to tell a group of friends you can't make it for dinner. Call SoundBite's toll-free number (800-768-6324), record a message, dial the phone number(s) of your recipients, and the service forwards your voice mail. It's free, but there's one catch: You must listen to a 10-second advertisement before recording your message, and recipients will also hear an ad—but the message comes first. You don't even need to fear an influx of telemarketer calls; the service specifically bans such shills. And we thank them for that.

CHIC OR CHEAP

SAVEMONEY

Now that palmtop devices are a must-have, the latest accessories are what elevate you above the madding crowd. First off: Replace that cruddy stylus with something more tasteful from **STYLUSCENTRAL.COM**. The site sells nothing but styli, with more than 100 types to choose from. Options include replacements that fit into the existing slot or hybrid pen-and-stylus combos to slip in your pocket. Choices range from the retro-cool Fisher Bullet Space Pen ($20) to the $49 A.T. Cross Morph Stylus (pictured), which does double duty as both pen and stylus. If such design-centric panache still doesn't sate, StylusCentral will engrave up to four letters at no additional cost. The more practical-minded (or simply absentminded) are embraced as well: The 49-cent Everywhere Stylus is the best bet (in large quantities) for Palm tappers who lose styli as easily as they misplace sunglasses and umbrellas. Hey, no matter which way you decide to go, it's good to have options. —L.G.

Picture this...

Want to show your family, 1,754 miles away, pictures you took yesterday of Junior's first steps? Try these Web services

FAMILY: TED WOOD/STONE

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN YOUR PARENTS since Christmas, and the last time your brother came to town he still had his hair and his third wife. So how do you show close-yet-faraway loved ones photos of the kids' birthdays or your trip to Barcelona? Take it online.

A handful of sites will grant or rent you space to store a digital photo album. How it works: Upload digitized pictures from your computer, arrange them by theme, annotate them with captions, then invite friends and family to log on at their leisure.

SAVEMONEY

Of course, if you want to share your images, why not doctor them up a bit? No, you can't get your brother's hair back. But depending upon the breadth of features at a given site, you can reduce or eliminate red eye and adjust color, contrast, and other key elements.

Here's our quick, handy guide to the most popular album sites. —L.G.

	$$$	FEATURES	EDITING TOOLS	STORAGE/LIMITS?
CLUB PHOTO [clubphoto.com]	Free; $39.95 a year for premium service	Offers public, semipublic (users need your link), or password-protected access	Brighten/darken or rotate images	Unlimited
KODAK PHOTONET [www.photonet.com]	$5.99 to post up to 36 images for a month	Visitors must register before browsing; you can also send photo postcards	Image warp for e-mail postcards	$1.95 for each additional month of posting
PHOTOLOFT [www.photoloft.com]	Free	Albums are public, but you can password-protect them; you can order prints and photo gifts	Rotate, crop photos	50MB
PHOTOWORKS [photoworks.com]	Free*	Each album has a specific Web address, in lieu of a password system	Rotate, crop, scale, or change color depth	Unlimited
ZING [zing.com]	Free	Albums can be either private or public; private albums don't require a password, just a URL	Brighten/darken, flip, rotate, control red eye, zoom, crop	Unlimited

*Provided you buy goods or services from the site during a six-month period or indicate that you want to remain active every six months. Unlimited storage free only to surfers using PhotoWorks processing services.

ONLINE PICKS

The 10 most popular games at Uproar

1. 5 REEL SLOTS
2. BINGO BLITZ
3. FAMILY FEUD
4. MAH JONG
5. BLOWOUT BINGO
6. MAH JONG SOLITAIRE
7. 3 REEL SLOTS
8. TO TELL THE TRUTH
9. BINGO
10. PYRAMID SOLITAIRE

Rankings reflect January traffic at [uproar.com].

TOPSWAPS

The most-swapped games at Switchouse

1. THE SIMS
2. SHENMUE
3. LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
4. CRAZY TAXI
5. GOLDENEYE 007
6. FINAL FANTASY VIII
7. FINAL FANTASY VII
8. FINAL FANTASY IX
9. METAL GEAR SOLID
10. RESIDENT EVIL—CODE: VERONICA

Rankings reflect January swaps at [switchouse.com].

Star Wars: Webisode I

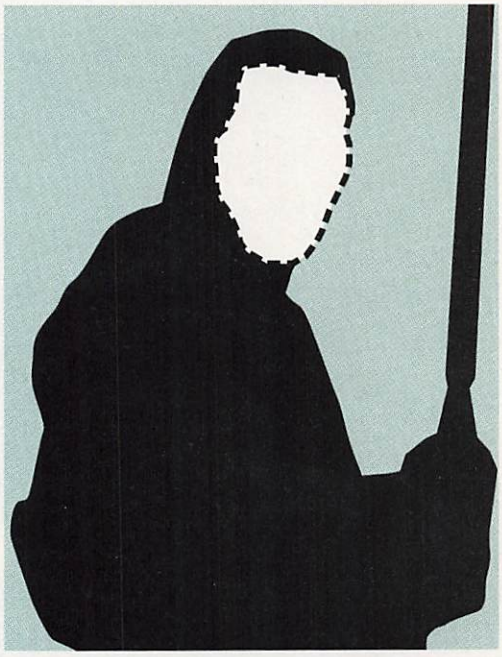
Are you ready to appear in the next *Star Wars* tale? No screen test necessary...and you can stay home, too

SORRY, BUT YOU'RE SIMPLY NOT A HARD-CORE *Star Wars* nut unless you've asked yourself the question: "Which character would I be?" Next year you can create your own, thanks to Verant, makers of EverQuest. The creators of that multiplayer role-playing game plan to deliver **STAR WARS GALAXIES** [starwarsgalaxies.com] to the Web in 2002, in conjunction with the cinematic release of *Star Wars: Episode II.*

Predictably, this project is shrouded in secrecy. However, Tom Byron, LucasArts director of product marketing, tells *Y-Life* that the first-person role-play title won't be tied to any of the studio's *Star Wars* films in particular. Thousands of players, Byron says, will simultaneously roam familiar terrain, including locales such as Tatooine, Dagobah, and Hoth, as well as the deck of the famed *Millennium Falcon* spaceship. Combat, puzzle solving, space travel, and full interaction with characters old and new will all be part of your main missions and side-quests.

"It'll be possible for a Jedi in training to meet up with Darth Vader himself in his or her travels," says Byron. Further contributing to this realism, "players will be able to see these worlds change and evolve over time," he adds.

Sony's **THE STATION** [station.sony.com] will host Galaxies exclusively for an as-yet-undetermined monthly fee (in addition to the purchase price of the initial CD or DVD). Beta testing starts in 2002. —M.S.



GAMINGROUNDUP

GIVE ME LIBERTY

As much as you love your Game Boy, there are better pieces of handheld technology for a grown-up to pull out of his pocket. Thanks to **GAMBIT STUDIOS LIBERTY EMULATOR** [gambitstudios.com/Liberty.asp], you can enjoy heated "Donkie" action (at right) on your very mature-looking Handspring Visor or PalmPilot. *Free.*

WORLD WIDE WAR

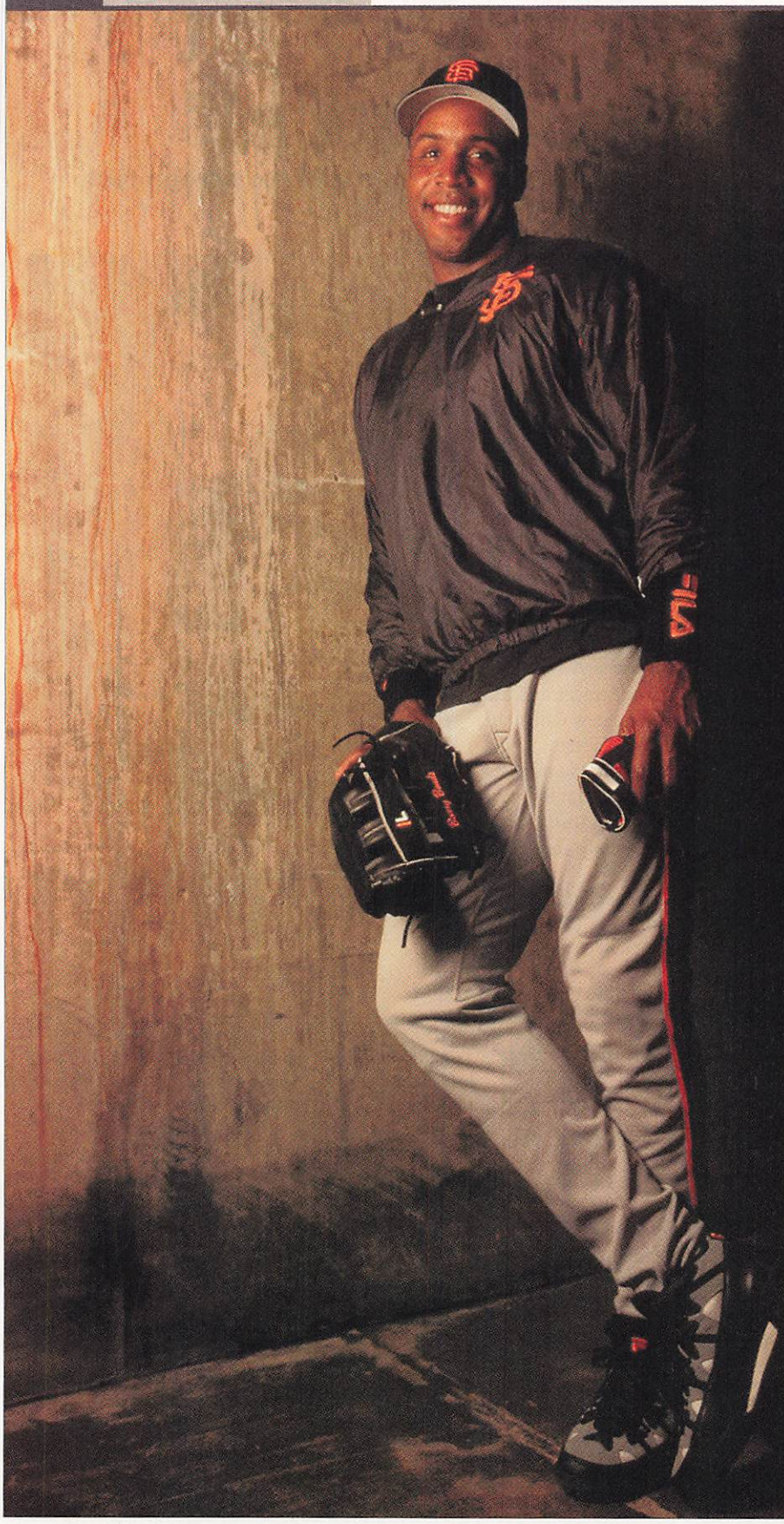
When you find a good joke on the Web, you send it to your friends. That's the idea behind **BATTLEMAIL** [www.battlemail.com], except that you're invited to join half a million surfers sending and playing games with their friends via e-mail. Among the site's homegrown titles are BattleMail Kung-Fu and Turkey Death-Match, billed as the "ultimate carve 'em up" action game. All games are fun, free, and small enough to send.

FEELING TEASED?

Demo now, pay later for the "full" version. It's a fine way to buy games online, but you might also sample the fare at **FREEGAMES.ORG**. The site stocks 700 fully free games—with no strings attached. You'll find clones of Tetris, Space Invaders, and Darts, plus flight simulations, murder mysteries, and other perennials.

ON A FACT-FINDING MISSION?

Tap into what's arguably the largest collection of game-specific frequently asked question lists at **GAMEFAQS** [gamefaqs.com]. These guides offer cheat codes, walk-throughs, character dossiers, and "Easter eggs." Platforms covered include arcade games, portable players, PCs, Macintoshes, and game consoles. —M.S.



High-Tech Giant

San Francisco slugger **Barry Bonds** rules the field as the National League's Most Virtual Player

HOME RUNS, HOME PAGES: THEY'RE both part of a day's work and play for San Francisco Giants outfielder Barry Bonds, a three-time Most Valuable Player who's arguably baseball's most wired athlete.

As most sports greats do, Bonds hosts an official site: **BARRY BONDS** [barrybondsdirect.com]. But it's his brick-and-mortar home that reflects the slugger's true Net smarts. Eight PCs boast high-speed access, while wireless connections control everything from the garage door to the hot tub.

"As soon as you come in, boom, you're at T-2," says Bonds, referring to his massive bandwidth. "Bill Gates may have a better-wired house than me, but he also has more money."

After signing a $44 million contract in 1992, Bonds craved financial data and company research, so he jumped headfirst into the Net for investment info. Now, while on the road, he often spends hours instant messaging with his kids; at home he burns his own CDs.

"Napster is great—you can steal, which is good," says the base-stealing expert.

Bonds isn't shy about sharing his Net savvy with his cohorts on the diamond: At last year's all-star game, Pirates catcher Jason Kendall got an hour-long lesson from Bonds on how to track his finances online.

"I love to pick Barry's brain," Kendall says. "He knows what he's talking about." And Bonds cares about sharing with those less fortunate: He has helped raise funds to buy computers for San Francisco's inner-city schools.

Having made more than $50 million (and counting), Bonds can afford as many T-2 lines as he wants. "Like everybody else, if there's one thing I hate," he says, "it's waiting for things to download." —A.S.

SCOTT CLARKE

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BY TY WENGER

All the News That's Fit to Strip

NakedNews delivers a **unique brand** of way nude journalism

CLICK ON YOUR PREFERRED STREAMING video player, and Victoria Sinclair, a telegenic 34-year-old anchorwoman, stands before you in a crisp white blouse and full-length black skirt. Her brown hair is pulled back in a bun.

"An Israeli diplomat was shot in Amman, Jordan, yesterday," she intones in the polished cadence of a news veteran, as she casually reaches for the buttons on her blouse. "Tuesday's attack was the second targeting an Israeli diplomat in less than a month."

ABOVE: Sinclair, Foster, and Weston (left to right), NakedNews' bare assets.

A minute later, she reports that "a Brazilian commission has accused over 800 people of drug trafficking and racketeering." Her blouse is now gone. So is her skirt. She reaches around to unhook her bra, exuding both a casualness and a sense of purpose.

By the time she reveals that "an Italian publisher has secured the Vatican's consent to produce a comic serializing the pope's life," Victoria Sinclair is naked. Well, to be fair, she's not totally naked—there *is* a 1-inch microphone clipped to her necklace.

The Net at its nuttiest spawns ideas that in hindsight seem inevitable. Such is the feeling when you see **NAKEDNEWS.COM**.

The self-proclaimed "program with nothing to hide," NakedNews began delivering its daily brand of "nudecasts" in January 2000. Since then it has attracted a loyal following, receiving an average of 100,000 page views per day despite little or no marketing effort. On days when it is plugged by Howard Stern, that number can spike to a quarter million.

This is not surprising. What might catch you off guard, however, is the level of credibility to which NakedNews aspires. It's a small operation, with a staff of seven producing each day's 15-minute show from a studio in Toronto. But Elliott Shulman, its producer and cocreator along with Sinclair, speaks loftily about its approach and impact.

"We recognized that we should take ourselves very seriously; it's the only way others would," Shulman says. "And we thought that if we could have a woman strip to the bare bones, physically and metaphorically, we could do the same thing with the story."

The show's four female newscasters—anchorperson Sinclair, business reporter Carmen Russo, sportscaster Holly Weston, and weatherperson Diane Foster—strive to convey a certain "naked girl next door" sensibility. The newscasters' reports are concise; international news is quite thorough.

That's not to say that you would want NakedNews to supplant **MSNBC** [msnbc.com] as your primary source of worldwide information, but if you can actually pay attention to what they're saying, you'll glean more of an education than you would from any local news program. This show skips sky-cam shots and stories of heroic pets. To be sure, the site breaks some rules. For obvious reasons, NakedNews chooses to ignore the television maxim that anchors should never turn their backs to the audience.

But as Sinclair declares, if the siren song of NakedNews can lure just one uninformed citizen to the rocky waters of knowledge, where's the harm in that?

"We get e-mails from people who say they might not otherwise always be up on current events, and they're finding that because of us they've got stuff to talk about when they go to their neighborhood bar or wherever," Sinclair says. "It makes you feel good to know that you can educate them.

"Of course, the most common e-mail we get is still, 'Why didn't I think of that?' And it's always in caps. 'WHY,' they're yelling, 'WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT FIRST?'"

NIGEL DICKSON

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THESITES

WEB TOPPERS
The most popular sites among Web surfers

SITE	UNIQUE VISITORS (IN MILLIONS)
1 YAHOO.COM*	52.0
2 MSN.COM	44.0
3 AOL.COM	34.0
4 MICROSOFT.COM	29.0
5 PASSPORT.COM	25.6
6 LYCOS.COM*	25.3
7 HOTMAIL.COM	22.7
8 AMAZON.COM	20.3
9 GO.COM	19.7
10 BLUEMOUNTAINARTS.COM	16.7

WHERE'S THE BUZZ?
The most-visited news/info/entertainment sites...

SITE	UNIQUE VISITORS (IN MILLIONS)
1 GRAB.COM	13.5
2 REAL.COM	11.7
3 FLOWGO.COM	11.3
4 IWIN.COM	9.6
5 ABOUT.COM	9.3

...and the most-visited news/info sites

SITE	UNIQUE VISITORS (IN MILLIONS)
1 WEATHER.COM	11.9
2 MSNBC.COM	10.1
3 CNN.COM	9.3
4 ABOUT.COM	9.3
5 WEATHERBUG.COM	3.9

Media Metrix [mediametrix.com] measures the preferences of more than 60,000 Net surfers. "Unique visitors" represents the number of users who visited the site once during December. Apparent ties are the result of rounding. *Aggregated sites

NETPOLL

ALL OF THE ABOVE
Q: Stranded on a *Survivor*-like island of celebrities, whom would you vote off?

EMINEM	49%
ALEC BALDWIN	23%
REGIS PHILBIN	12%
MEG RYAN	6%
SOCKS THE CAT	5%
CATHERINE ZETA-JONES	5%

Poll represents responses of 8,327 voters at USAToday.com as of 1/26.

CHATS
The best-attended get-togethers at Yahoo! Chat [chat.yahoo.com].

1. **MICHAEL FREENY,** relationship expert [1/3]
2. **MICHAEL FREENY** [1/24]
3. **BONNIE EAKER WEIL,** relationship expert [1/10]
4. **PEPPER SCHWARTZ,** relationship expert [1/18]
5. **MICHAEL FREENY** [1/17]
6. **PEPPER SCHWARTZ** [1/29]
7. **MICHAEL FREENY** [1/31]
8. **MICHAEL T. WEISS AND ANDREA PARKER,** stars of TNT's *The Pretender 2001* [1/22]
9. **O-TOWN,** boy band [1/25]
10. **PINK,** singer [1/23]

Rankings reflect January chat attendance.

DOWNLOADS
The most-downloaded software titles at ZDNet Downloads [hotfiles.com]...*

1. **YAHOO! MESSENGER,** instant-messaging software
2. **GO!ZILLA,** downloading tool
3. **ZONEALARM,** security software for DSL/cable modem users
4. **DOWNLOAD ACCELERATOR PLUS,** software utility
5. **TAXACT 2000 STANDARD EDITION VERSION,** tax preparation software

...and the top PDA downloads at PalmGear H.Q. [palmgear.com].**

1. **BIGCLOCK,** digital timekeeper
2. **LAUNCHER III,** program launcher
3. **SILVERSCREEN,** program launcher
4. **QUICKOFFICE,** document conversion software
5. **DIDDLEBUG,** electronic sticky notes

** Rankings reflect downloads during the week ending 1/31.*

*** Rankings reflect January downloads through 1/19.*

BOOKS
The top-selling hardcover fiction titles at Amazon.com...*

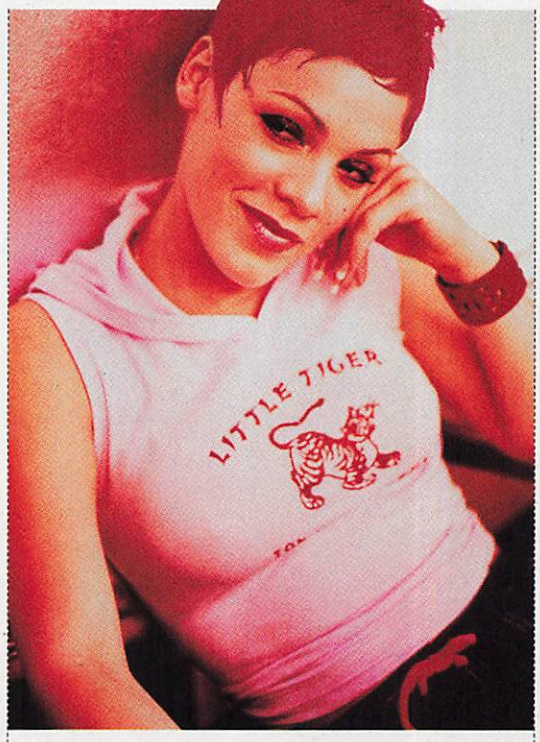
1. **PROTECT AND DEFEND,** Richard North Patterson
2. **THE FIRST COUNSEL,** Brad Meltzer
3. **SHADOW OF THE HEGEMON,** Orson Scott Card
4. **PRODIGAL SUMMER,** Barbara Kingsolver
5. **CODE TO ZERO,** Ken Follett
6. **THE CONSTANT GARDENER,** John Le Carré
7. **DROWNING RUTH,** Christina Schwarz
8. **FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE,** Dean R. Koontz
9. **THE MARK: THE BEAST RULES THE WORLD (LEFT BEHIND #8),** Tim LaHaye, Jerry B. Jenkins
10. **ROSES ARE RED,** James Patterson

...and the most-swapped books at Switchouse [switchouse.com].**

1. **HARRY POTTER & THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS,** J.K. Rowling
2. **DROWNING RUTH,** Christina Schwarz
3. **HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN,** J.K. Rowling
4. **MERRICK,** Anne Rice
5. **HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE,** J.K. Rowling

**Rankings reflect sales during the week ending 1/31.*

***Rankings reflect January swaps.*



FILM
The top-selling DVD titles at Amazon.com...*

1. **GLADIATOR**
2. **WHAT LIES BENEATH**
3. **WHEN HARRY MET SALLY**
4. **ME, MYSELF & IRENE**
5. **MEET THE PARENTS**

...the film titles most viewed at AtomFilms [atomfilms.com]...**

1. **GO SICK: X-TRA SPECIAL DELIVERY,** comedy
2. **COMING OF AGE,** comedy
3. **STARGEEKS,** comedy
4. **GO SICK: BAD ASS METER MAID,** comedy
5. **NIGHT DEPOSIT,** comedy

...and the highest-priced stars per share on HSX.com: Hollywood Stock Exchange [hsx.com].***

1. **TOM HANKS,** $6,993
2. **WILL SMITH,** $5,439
3. **TOM CRUISE,** $4,946
4. **GEORGE LUCAS,** $4,766
5. **HARRISON FORD,** $4,314

**Rankings reflect January sales.*

***Rankings reflect January viewings.*

****Rankings reflect end-of-day quotes on 1/26.*

SEARCHES
The most popular queries on Lycos [lycos.com].

1. **DRAGONBALL**
2. **BRITNEY SPEARS**
3. **NAPSTER**
4. **IRS**
5. **SUPER BOWL**
6. **VALENTINE'S DAY**
7. **WWF**
8. **TATTOOS**
9. **LAS VEGAS**
10. **POKÉMON**

Rankings reflect searches conducted during the week ending 1/27.

MUSIC
Top CD sales, as tallied by NMC: Net Music Countdown [netmusiccountdown.com]...*

1. **ONE,** The Beatles
2. **NO ANGEL,** Dido
3. **ALL THAT YOU CAN'T LEAVE BEHIND,** U2
4. **LOVERS ROCK,** Sade
5. **WHITE LADDER,** David Gray

...the most popular CDs played on computers, as tallied by Gracenote [gracenote.com]...**

1. **THE MARSHALL MATHERS LP,** Eminem
2. **ONE,** The Beatles
3. **THE CHOCOLATE STARFISH AND THE HOT DOG FLAVORED WATER,** Limp Bizkit
4. **ALL THAT YOU CAN'T LEAVE BEHIND,** U2
5. **GREATEST HITS,** Lenny Kravitz

...and the most-swapped albums at Switchouse [switchouse.com].***

1. **SIGNIFICANT OTHER,** Limp Bizkit
2. **THE MARSHALL MATHERS LP,** Eminem
3. **THE SLIM SHADY LP,** Eminem
4. **ENEMA OF THE STATE,** Blink-182
5. **CALIFORNICATION,** Red Hot Chili Peppers

**Rankings reflect sales during the week ending 2/2.*

***Rankings reflect play during the week ending 1/21.*

****Rankings reflect January swaps.*

STARGEEKS: COURTESY ATOMFILMS; PINK: NAOMI KALTMAN/CORBIS OUTLINE

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SINCE 1913

What Net slump? The Web's thriving

Good riddance to **get-rich-quick** *schemes*

THE WAY TO SURVIVE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE NET IS TO SEE IT AS A series of myths and fantasies—the Net is a nest of hackers and thieves; it's the home of pornography; it's ruining your kids; it's saving the world; it's changing everything. The myth of the dot-com era was that all business and money were moving online, and untold riches awaited us in the digital hills. ■ There were those oddball skeptics and fruitcakes who wondered if we really needed all those wireless devices to get us our e-mail before we got from the car to the house, or if we required five pet-food sites to ship us beef-basted rawhide overnight.

Turns out we didn't. The laws of the non-virtual world now apply to the online world. To raise venture capital and please stockholders, you have to have a customer base and actually make money. End of dot-com era.

But does that mean the Net or tech world is in a slump?

Hardly. The tech world is booming, on the verge of one of its most interesting and creative periods.

Individual Web sites are exploding in number. Free home pages and e-mail, given away along with membership in Web sites like MSN and Yahoo!, have created an astonishing new culture. Half the country, it seems, has built personalized Web pages, bases from which to communicate with friends and relatives, link to shared interests, or even dabble in e-commerce.

Mom-and-pop stores, driven out of business in the offline universe by the Wal-Marting of America, are booming online. Go to **GOOGLE** [google.com], type in any product, and see for yourself. Online, every retailer is global, a radical shift in Net economics involving smaller merchants and individuals, from cheese makers to antiques dealers. Sites such as **EBAY** [ebay.com] have become international centers of personalized commerce and retailing.

> The myth of the dot-com era was that all business and money were moving online, and untold riches awaited us in the digital hills

Type *community* into Yahoo! and you'll get almost 15,000 hits. Go to **NETNOIR.COM** and find the world's largest gathering place for African American singles. Go to **SLASHDOT** [slashdot.com], a site I write for, and see geeks and programmers from all over the world discussing and crafting the new software and infrastructure of the Web.

Go to **PLASTIC** [plastic.com] and experience a new kind of bottom-up media in which readers and users—not just editors and producers—set the agenda. Similarly, check out **EVERYTHING2** [everything2.com] and **THE VINES NETWORK** [thevines.com]. These sites *can't* become elitist or disconnected from their readers, since their readers are defining and participating in content—a revolutionary change in media.

As Cliff Figallo points out in his very smart new book, *Hosting Web Communities* (John Wiley & Sons), "The expanding availability of modern software platforms, utilities, and services has opened up possibilities for many people to create and host sites matched to their very personal definitions of community."

If you define the Internet strictly in terms of business purchases of communications equipment, new orders for information-technology equipment, consumer spending on telephone data services, or the exact state of the Nasdaq on any given day, then there is a slump. But that's too narrow a way to perceive it.

Sites devoted to gaming and open-source distribution of textbooks and reference materials, as well as file-sharing communities modeled on the original Napster, are all thriving. Some of the most creative and significant evolutions in the recent life of the Net—Napster, Linux, Gnutella, FreeNet, sophisticated virtual-reality gaming software, the World Wide Web itself—have all been developed without the help of dot-coms and venture capitalists. The Net was, in fact, created mostly by nonprofit-oriented researchers, engineers, and cybergurus.

Computers and Net access are being offered by companies like Ford, Delta Air Lines, and Intel as an employee benefit, and there is no significant social or cultural group that is not moving rapidly online, with the notable exception of the most impoverished underclass.

There's no evidence that business or retailing will vanish from the Web. Catalog companies such as L.L. Bean and Lands' End are successfully incorporating e-shopping into their retailing plans.

The real bottom line is that the Net isn't in a slump. Neither is technology. Badly run and unprofitable Web businesses are. Y

E-MAIL: jonkatz@slashdot.org

SUNDAY 2PM: TIME TO GET TOGETHER WITH THE GUYS AND COMPARE NOTES.

SEE WHERE IT TAKES YOU

remember to drink responsibly.

© 2001, Ste. Pierre Smirnoff FLS, Stamford, CT, Smirnoff Ice Premium Malt Beverage.

Is it wrong to hog a Net connection?

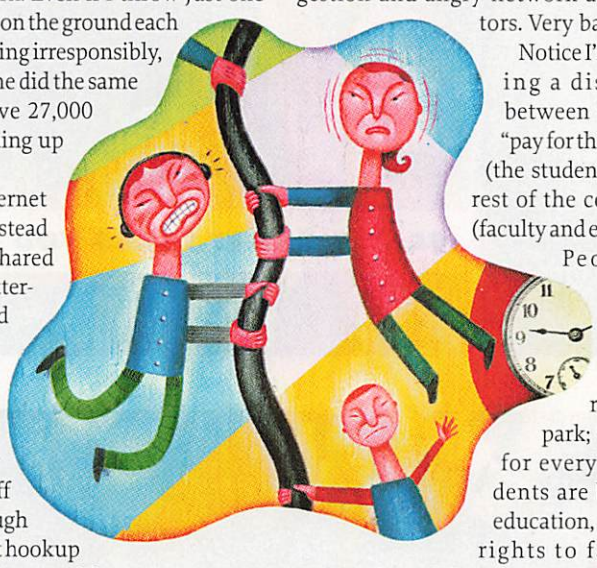
When people **abuse bandwidth**, *we all lose*

YOU THOUGHT NO ONE KNEW. YOU THOUGHT THE RULE WAS MADE to be broken. But the eyes of the network administrator are upon you! ■ *Dear Angela:* My university has a policy that employees should use the Net only for work during business hours. A problem arises when people listen to radio via streaming audio, for example, rather than using a radio and headphones to tune in local stations. Should we admonish fellow employees who are sucking up bandwidth for personal convenience? Do we who do not pay for this resource have more responsibility than we would at home?

—*Tom*

Think of your university Net hookup as a community resource, like a public park. Most of us understand that it's wrong to litter in the park. Even if I throw just one candy wrapper on the ground each year, I'm behaving irresponsibly, since if everyone did the same thing we'd have 27,000 wrappers trashing up the landscape.

With an Internet connection, instead of littering a shared space, you're littering a shared time. Any university has only so much bandwidth, meaning that *x* amount of stuff can move through the school's Net hookup per second. During work hours, many community members are trying to get a piece of that *x*. If just one person is whittling away a chunk of it listening to streaming audio (or swapping MP3 files, or sending out vast quantities of e-mail), no one will notice much difference, and people with work-related Net traffic will have plenty of *x* to share. But what if a lot of people do it? You got it: Exit bandwidth, enter congestion and angry network administrators. Very bad.



Notice I'm not making a distinction between those who "pay for this resource" (the students) and the rest of the community (faculty and employees). People who pay more property tax don't have more rights to the park; the park is for everybody. Students are buying an education, not special rights to faster Net access. If you follow that train of thought too far, you end up differentiating between students who get financial aid and those whose parents foot the bill, and let's not even discuss those demanding dorks from the alumni association.

On the other hand, if your relationship to the bandwidth provider is different—say you're at home and buying high-speed access from the cable company—you have every right to expect access as advertised, with restrictions (for instance, no bulk e-mailing) spelled out. That's not a community; that's a contract. Instead of a group of users consensually bonded by shared interests, you're all individual customers of the service provider.

Hear that, cable companies? People connecting to the Net via cable modem share bandwidth with nearby households (that's the nature of cable), but they're still functioning not as members of a community but as individual customers. It's the duty of the service provider to make bandwidth available in whatever quantities the customer has purchased, and I'll not have any whining about how awfully expensive that's going to be for those companies. If they can afford to advertise for more customers, they can afford to do right by the ones they've got.

> With an Internet connection, instead of littering a shared space, you're littering a shared time

Dear Angela: The other day I was checking out **TELL ME...AM I HOT OR NOT? [amihotornot.com]**, and I'm sure I saw my ex-girlfriend. On the scale of one to 10, I gave her a one, but it was just out of spite. Now her rating's really low. Should I feel bad?

—*Anonymous*

Bad that you did something petty and small, bad that other people think you dated an ugly chick, or bad that your ex-girlfriend is so starved for attention that she'd put a photo of herself on AmIHotOrNot? They say that brains are no substitute for ethics, but in your case I'm pretty sure ethics wouldn't have been a sufficient substitute for brains. There couldn't possibly be enough to make up the (in this case universal) deficit.

E-MAIL: angela_gunn@ziffdavis.com

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Buying gray-market goods spells trouble

How to get **a great deal** *without the risk*

DEAR E-VENGER:
Last August I contacted Canon about a technical question and found that a ZR10 digital camcorder I had purchased on **DIGITAL E-TAILER [digitaletailer.com]** was not under warranty because it didn't have a serial number. I e-mailed **DEALTIME [dealtime.com]**, the comparison-shopping site that led me to Digital E-Tailer, and DealTime said that the merchant would contact me to explain. Finally, in late November, a customer service rep from Digital E-Tailer called to say that I was not the only customer who had gotten a ZR10 without a serial number, and he agreed to send me a new camera if I would then return the old one. Three days later, the rep left an urgent message that his supervisor, Avi Sakkal, would not allow him to send another camera unless I first returned the old one or paid for a new one with my credit card. That didn't seem reasonable to me—I wasn't willing to return the "evidence" without a legitimate camera in hand. Sakkal then agreed to e-mail a Return Merchandise Authorization (RMA) code with no strings attached. I have neither received the e-mail code nor heard from him.

—Dan Harmon
Chico, California

DEAR DAN:
Comparison-shopping sites like DealTime are fine for locating items at the price you want, but they aren't *stores*—and thus aren't liable when a merchant fails to deliver. It's in DealTime's interest to make sure vendors hold up their end of the bargain, but because companies pay to be included in searches, comparison-shopping sites are apt to give merchants the benefit of the doubt rather than drop them and lose revenue. "It's fair to think we've done some vetting," says Deborah Sack, vice president of marketing at DealTime. "But we're very clear that consumers should do several things themselves: look at **GÓMEZ.COM** [a DealTime partner], look at merchants' policies, and keep receipts. There are consumers who care only about the lowest price. But lowest-price places don't always have the best customer service."

> 'There are consumers who care only about the lowest price. But lowest-price places don't always have the best customer service'

Indeed, click on the Gómez Certified icon on Digital E-Tailer's home page and you'll find that Gómez gives it only two out of three stars, saying the merchant has met "minimum" standards and has "at least a satisfactory" online store. Digital E-Tailer does not crack Gómez's top-10 list of electronics stores, and one customer review warns people to avoid Digital E-Tailer "at all costs."

Holly Cherico, vice president of communications for the Council of Better Business Bureaus, thinks you're wise not to authorize any more charges because Digital E-Tailer has not "demonstrated responsible action." She recommends filing a complaint with the **BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU [bbb.org]** or **BBBONLINE [bbbonline.org]**.

When we called Sakkal, he again said he would e-mail you an RMA code. At press time, a few weeks later, we understand you still had not heard from him. On January 23, Sakkal copied us on an e-mail that he was sending to you. We saw that your name was spelled *Harman*, which may explain why the messages never made it to you.

We also contacted Canon, which said that "gray-market" goods—sold by authorized dealers to unauthorized ones like Digital E-Tailer—are a growing problem. Unauthorized vendors strip off the serial number, which normally appears on the box, the warranty card, and the product itself. Without that number, manufacturers can't track their goods and won't honor the warranty.

Michael Zorich, assistant marketing director for Canon U.S.A.'s video division, suggests that if a price seems too good to be true, you should check with the manufacturer to make sure the dealer is authorized. (Canon is in the process of posting a dealer locator on **CANON U.S.A. [www.usa.canon.com]**.) Also ask the dealer whether the product will come with a serial number and what the return policy is. If you still end up with gray-market goods, contact the manufacturer.

DEAR E-VENGER:
How can I protect myself if a site goes belly-up before my merchandise or refund arrives?

—Loretta G.
Anacortes, Washington

DEAR LORETTA:
When you shop online, judging the stability of the business you're dealing with can be tricky—especially if the business is new and relatively small. However, the fact that you're usually paying by credit card lessens the risk: If there's a problem, the credit card issuer will help you resolve the matter.

Still, you should always investigate a company's reputation before you buy. See what rating services such as Gómez and **BIZRATE.COM** have to say, check out the company's return and refund policies, and note the physical address, making sure you understand the consumer protection laws for that state or country.

VICTIM OF AN ONLINE TRANSACTION GONE AWRY? LET E-VENGER EVALUATE YOUR CASE. FOR DETAILS, GO TO WWW.YIL.COM/EVENGER.

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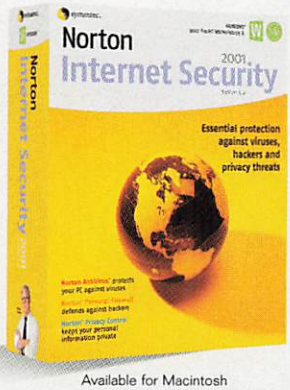

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Remember to Breathe

It's an Air Force Reserve weekend. It only comes once a month. And it's a chance to step outside your daily grind and get a whole new look at the world. Whatever you become when you join the Air Force Reserve—parajumper or aircraft mechanic, intelligence apprentice or medical assistant—you'll find yourself on an amazing team, doing things you never dreamed possible. Pushing limits. Pushing yourself. Being part of the Reserve takes as little as one weekend a month, and two weeks a year. There are benefits like great pay, retirement plan, and base privileges. To discover the whole story, call or visit our website today.

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COOL TOOLS

ULTIMATE ACCESSORIES FOR THE DIGITAL LIFE BY DON WILLMOTT

1

2

3

PICTURE PERFECT

Every day brings new ways to capture and share photos and video files. **Kensington**'s **DIGITAL PHOTO ALBUM PLUS (1)** is a 7.4-inch (diagonal) 640-by-480-pixel display that you can put anywhere there's an electrical outlet. It rotates through up to 24 images. Meanwhile, **Samsung** is poised to send Net-style streaming video to your phone. Its **VIDEO CELL PHONE (2)** has a video function key that yields a list of available content. The phone can vary video size, speed, and image quality depending on your carrier's bandwidth, but Samsung claims that even today's narrow pipes can handle the video. For a supercompact way to tote snapshots, there's **VideoChip Technologies' PHOTO WALLET (3)**, a 6-inch (diagonal) LCD display that shows off digital photos stored on CompactFlash cards. Scroll through the photos, or set up a slide show.

(1) $399 [kensington.com]

(2) Price not yet determined [emblaze.com]

(3) $300 [videochip.com]

BOY SWIMMING: PETER ZANDER/NONSTOCK; DOG: MARC JOSEPH/NONSTOCK

4 BURN, BABY, BURN

It's about time an external storage device had some style. The UFO-like Iomega Predator CD-RW drive is particularly fast and versatile, with all sorts of optional adapters for any kind of setup you may have (USB 1.1 is standard). You can fill CDs with 700MB of data (there's nothing like a good backup plan to ease your worried mind), 80 minutes of audio CD music, or up to 11 hours' worth of MP3 audio files. A suite of software is included to manage all your CD-creation and cataloging tasks.

IOMEGA PREDATOR
$270
[iomegadirect.com]

5 LIGHTS, CAMERA, LEGO!

This certainly looks like a heck of a lot more fun than the Super 8 stop-motion Claymation you tried in junior-high art class. Lego's Steven Spielberg MovieMaker Set includes not only sets, props, and 400 building blocks (plus a mini-Steven!) to create your own fantasy back lot, but also the 30-frame-per-second manual-focus digital camera you'll need to capture the action you create. All the footage gets saved to your PC, where surprisingly sophisticated video editing, sound, and special-effects software awaits to help you polish your minor masterpiece. The set comes with earthquake props—but you'll probably want to spring for the explosion, car stunt, dinosaur head, and adventure-scene accessories as well.

LEGO STEVEN SPIELBERG MOVIEMAKER SET
$180
[lego.com/studios]

6 SHOOT AND SURF

Ricoh's high-end RDC-i700 digital camera does a lot more than just take pictures. It includes a 3.5-inch flip-up touch screen and enough memory to record voice memos and handwritten notes. Add a wireless modem in the PC Card slot and things really get interesting. You can surf the Net on the small screen, send your photos as e-mail messages, or post photos online instantly, using custom software that can direct the images right into position on the page you specify.

RICOH RDC-i700
$1,500
[ricohzone.com]

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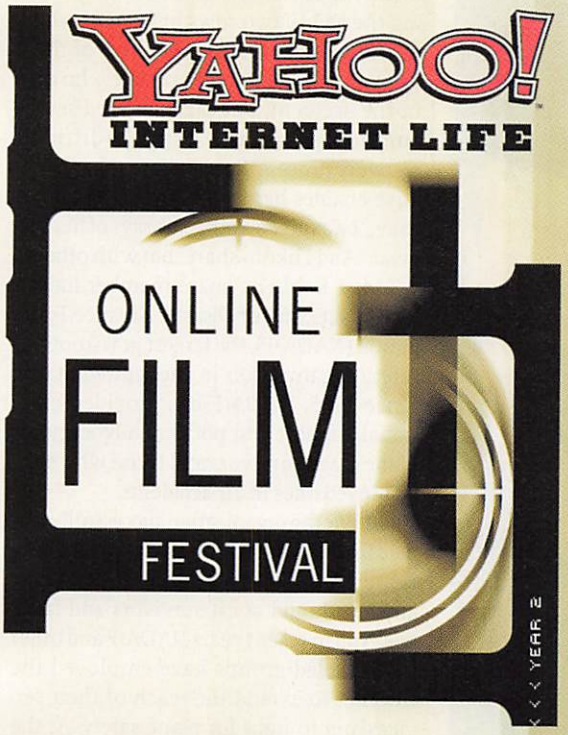
HTTP://WWW. yilfilmfestival.com

Year 2, March 2001



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Ron Friedman, Platinium Studios
Juliann Janus, MGM.com
Jason Kliot, Blowup Pictures
Johan Liedgren, Honkworm
Chris Moore, Liveplanet
Phillip Nakov, Countingdown.com
Joe Nussbaum, Geroge Lucas in Love
Gordon Paddison, New Line
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Jonathan Wells, RES Magazine

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movies.yahoo.com

Top voted films will be screened at the live event in March.

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RES

The New York Times

Tragedy in the sky, hope online

Select sites help **accident survivors** *share their sorrow and push for safer air travel*

AN EXPLOSION SOUNDED, FOLLOWED BY TERROR. AS HER PLANE TREMbled 37,000 feet above ground, Mary Kahl prayed softly and held hands with her husband and 14-year-old son, while others wrote good-bye notes to loved ones. A long 45 minutes later, United Airlines Flight 232 crash-landed in Sioux City, Iowa, on July 19, 1989, knocking Kahl unconscious and shattering the DC-10 two rows in front of where her family was seated. The three of them were not among the 112 people who died in the accident, but each suffered severe emotional trauma. Despite a difficult recovery process, Kahl believes that being alive enables her to pass on her good fortune. "I was given a gift," she says of her survival. "And I like to share that with others."

Today, Kahl is a board-member liaison for the National Air Disaster Alliance/Foundation (NADA/F), the largest grassroots air safety organization in the United States. Since 1995, NADA/F has provided emotional support and political advocacy for plane crash survivors and those who have lost loved ones in air accidents.

In 1996, the organization successfully lobbied for enactment of the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act, which details how airlines should assist survivors and families. And in recent years NADA/F and other like-minded groups have employed the Internet to extend the reach of their services and to fight for plane safety. At the **NATIONAL AIR DISASTER ALLIANCE/FOUNDATION** [planesafe.org], for instance, survivors post notices seeking other survivors. People share memories of friends or loved ones who died in air accidents. Casey Clarke, whose sister died in 1974 on TWA Flight 514, is using the site to rally support for a memorial to the victims of that disaster.

In addition to hosting its own message boards for victims' family members, the site links visitors to **ACCESS: AIRCRAFT CASUALTY EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES** [www.accesshelp.org]. Initiated by Heidi Snow, who lost her fiancé on TWA Flight 800, the site offers community support for victims of air disasters. It has grown into a network of support tools since its launch in 1996, hosting an online memorial where victims of air accidents all over the world log on to share their pain and memories.

According to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), a government organization that monitors travel-related safety issues, 2,221 passengers died in airline accidents between 1982 and 1999. And in 1999 alone, according to NTSB spokesperson Paul Schlamm, 628 people

ABOVE: A memorial on Long Island, New York, to the victims of TWA Flight 800.

died in a total of 1,908 general aviation (noncommercial airplane) accidents. Until the Net came along, it was often difficult for grieving family members to connect with others who shared their experiences.

But things are changing. NADA/F president Gail Dunham says that her organization's site recently helped coordinate contact between those who had suffered from the crash of a Boeing 737 plane in Argentina and those who had crashed in a 737 in the Philippines. Dunham, who lost a loved one in a 737 crash, says that the Internet was a valuable tool in enabling parties in both countries to learn from the concurrent investigations.

Until the Net came along, it was often difficult for grieving family members to connect with others

And in conjunction with plane accident survivors, pilots are also now employing the Internet to make air travel as safe as possible. Paul Omodt, spokesperson for the Northwest Airlines affiliate of the **AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL** [alpa.org], says this site makes airlines' internal communications about safety more efficient. "If a pilot perceives a potential safety problem, he can fill out a post-flight form online to have that information relayed immediately, rather than writing out a form that takes four days to get to the appropriate officials," Omodt says. Similarly, ALPA uses e-mail to relay safety alerts and updates to more than 20,000 of its 60,000 pilot members.

Even as the Net propels plane safety forward, survivors and family members rely on its capacity to link people. "Online, people who lost loved ones 40 years ago connect with others whose family members were on the same plane," says NADA/F president Dunham of her site's message and discussion boards. Kahl agrees that the Internet opens up lines of communication. "It's important to be in touch with people who have been through what you have," she says. "They know your suffering."

MEMORIAL: CORBIS SYGMA; SOLDIERS: CORBIS; PET CEMETERY: RICH FRISHMAN/STONE

SMALL TOUCHES

RECOVERING TREASURES

[www.artloss.com]

When artwork is stolen, victims are usually left with little recourse. But the Web now gives museums and individuals a glimmer of hope. **THE ART LOSS REGISTER** is the world's largest private database of stolen art and antiques. With information on 100,000-plus stolen works, the site allows those who had art stolen during the Holocaust, for example, to submit a report form to find out if their property has been recovered. And the register allows prospective buyers or lenders to determine if a piece has been reported stolen or lost.

RESEARCHING AIDS

[nmac.org]

The **NATIONAL MINORITY AIDS COUNCIL** supports research into HIV and AIDS issues of particular concern to minorities. For example, NMAC has lobbied for immigrant access to health care and education programs for the incarcerated. Visitors to the site can attend "virtual conferences" to find out more about current research and new developments. And occasional "Meet the Expert" sessions let users chat with professionals after watching an online slide show. The site also features article searches of HIV/AIDS publications. For those with an interest in how HIV/AIDS affects Native Americans in particular, another site, the **NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN AIDS PREVENTION CENTER** [www.nnaapc.org], details successful AIDS prevention programs and resources.

FIGHTING ADDICTION

[addictionsearch.com]

For anyone with a bad habit or an addiction, the Web can be an excellent outlet for discreetly finding helpful resources. **ADDICTION SEARCH**, for example, offers a vast array of articles about the roots and symptoms of addiction and highlights various approaches to treatment. The site focuses on drug and alcohol addictions as well as compulsive eating, gambling, and sexual behaviors. Caffeine and Internet addictions are also included. Students or family members who are trying to make sense of a loved one's problem will find an abundance of useful data and statistics.

MOURNING PETS

[petloss.com]

Losing an animal companion can be painful. **THE PET LOSS GRIEF SUPPORT WEBSITE** offers a shoulder. Whether you want to chat or just get phone numbers for grief hot lines, this site has a wealth of resources. The design is spare, but the homemade feel and personal touch prove reassuring.

OLD WAY NET WAY

COMPARING THE TRIED-AND-TRUE WITH THE NET-AND-NEW BY DAVID SHEFF

Donating to the people of India

OLD WAY

1 After reading about the devastating earthquake in Gujarat, India, I wanted to make a donation. I called the American Red Cross (after getting the phone number from 800-555-1212) and made a pledge over the phone, paying by credit card.

TIME ELAPSED:
10 minutes

COMMENTS: The agent on the phone explained that the money would go directly for sorely needed medical services, food, and water.

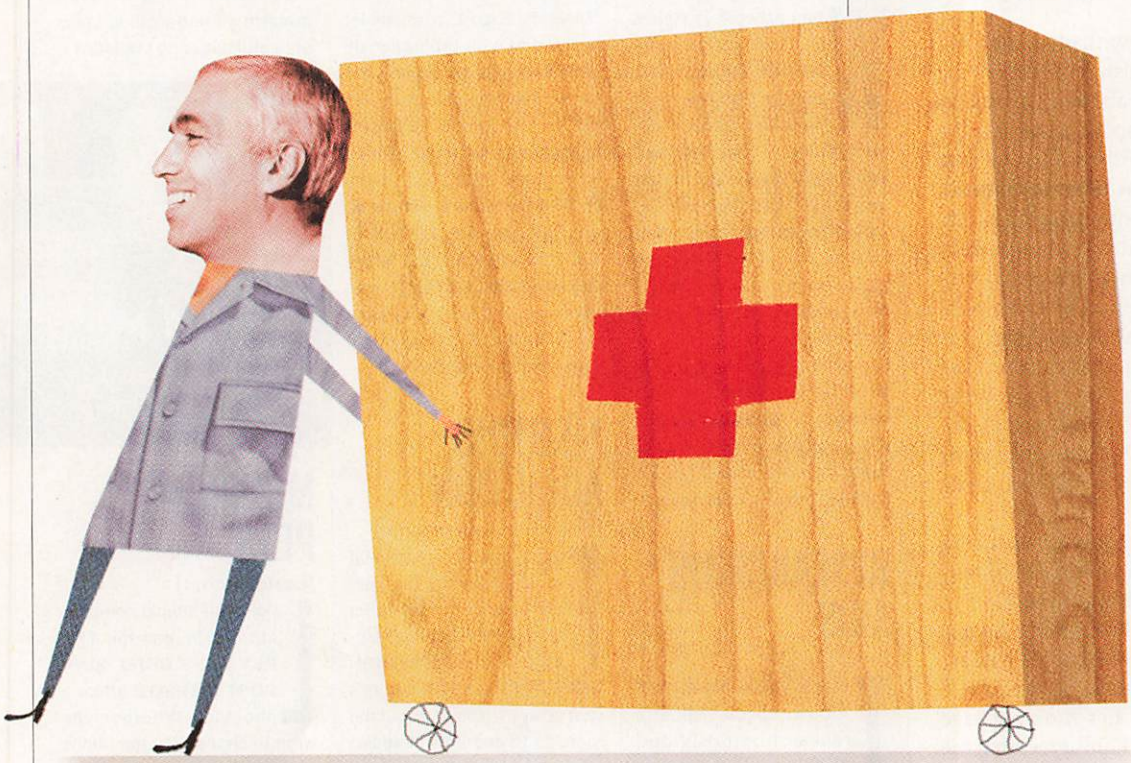
NET WAY

1 Checked the **AMERICAN RED CROSS** [redcross.org], where I read accounts of the earthquake. There is an instructive slide show that includes images of the quake's damage and the relief efforts.

2 Decided to donate more, this time online. It's possible to earmark a donation for the India crisis.

TIME ELAPSED:
16 minutes

COMMENTS: The site reports on crises in other parts of the world, of course. Also, there is information about ways that one can help besides donating money.



ILLUSTRATIONS: DAVID PLUNKERT

▶ **WINNER: TIE** In terms of donating it was a tie, but the Net provided a wealth of information.

Sending thank-you notes

OLD WAY

1 After my birthday dinner (I turned 45, but we won't get into that), I wanted to thank my friends. A stack of note cards in hand, I scrawled my gratitude for their gifts and friendship.

TIME ELAPSED:
30 minutes

COMMENTS: I had almost forgotten what it feels like to express myself in a handwritten note.

NET WAY

1 I didn't have one friend's new address handy, so I sent a thank-you by e-mail.

TIME ELAPSED:
3 minutes

COMMENTS: Miss Manners may disapprove, and I would agree with her. The electronic note was much less satisfying on my part.

▶ **WINNER: OLD WAY** Indoctrination rather than the genuine superiority of ink on paper may have held sway.

Buying a vacuum cleaner

OLD WAY

1 My artist wife has discovered a new passion: vacuuming. Newly obsessed, she decided that we needed a new vacuum cleaner.

2 She visited the local dealer, where a salesman gave her a demonstration of various makes and models. She became enamored with the Miele.

3 Unconvinced that the higher-priced model was necessary, she left the store with a price quote for the more reasonable (and cute) Flamenco II: $350.

TIME ELAPSED:
2.5 hours, including driving time

COMMENTS: The salesman threw a pile of dirt on the carpet to demonstrate the machine's sucking power.

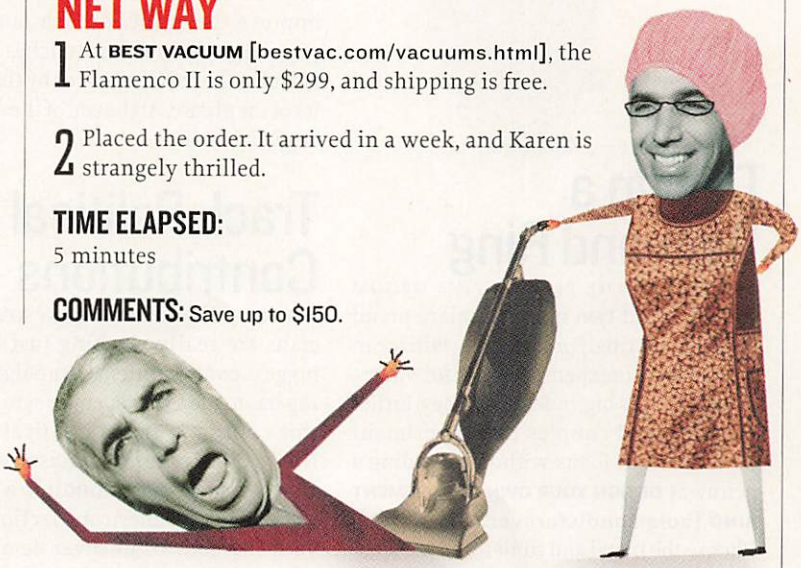
NET WAY

1 At **BEST VACUUM** [bestvac.com/vacuums.html], the Flamenco II is only $299, and shipping is free.

2 Placed the order. It arrived in a week, and Karen is strangely thrilled.

TIME ELAPSED:
5 minutes

COMMENTS: Save up to $150.



▶ **WINNER: NET WAY** You won't get the thrill of a live demonstration online, however.

INCREDIBLY USEFUL SITES™

THIS MONTH'S PRACTICAL DESTINATIONS BY RICHARD BUTNER

Mind Your Manners

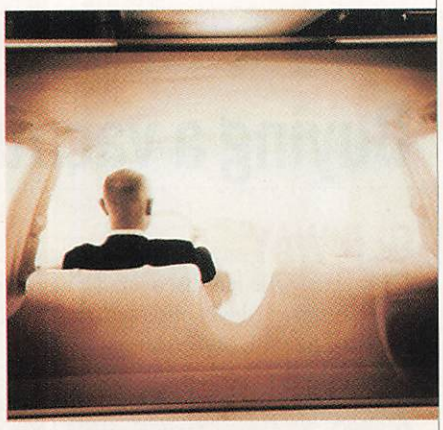
PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST OVERSEAS business trip? You'll need to pack your suitcase and check your passport, of course, but don't forget to brush up on local customs and comportment. **EXECUTIVEPLANET.COM** can help prepare you for high-powered international get-togethers. Click on a country name to get information on business etiquette and customs specific to that locality—what to wear, how to entertain, and more. And if you remember only one thing, make it this: Don't cross your legs in Thailand.

Discover Worthy Films

TIRED OF PLUNKING DOWN BIG BUCKS FOR cinematic duds? Don't head to the movie theater without consulting **CHECKTHEGRID** [checkthegrid.com]. Search for current releases or new videos, and you'll get an easy-to-digest recap of various newspaper reviews. Instead of a numerical rating, a number of stars, or a thumbs-up or thumbs-down, this site distills its arbiters' judgments into traffic-light format: Green means go see this film; red, don't go; and yellow suggests caution. Just click on a light to read the reviewer's opinion. If the lights are all green, you'll know you can head to the box office without trepidation. It's also nice that the default grid includes our own Roger Ebert among the chosen critics.

Remove Clichés

IF YOU'RE CHAMPING AT THE BIT TO DOT THE *i*'s and cross the *t*'s on that letter or report, don't jump the gun—get rid of those clichés first. Make sure you're not using a tired expression by checking **CLICHÉSITE.COM.** Writers and editors can use this site to improve the quality of their output, and you can get definitions of clichés here, too. Search either by category or by the first letter of the phrase. At the end of the day, you'll be glad you did.



Design a Diamond Ring

GUIDES SAY THE PROSPECTIVE GROOM should spend two months' salary on an engagement ring. For some, that will mean a tasteful yet inexpensive band; for others, a bauble that's big, bold, and pricey. Either way, engaged couples can experiment with different looks without spending a penny at **DESIGN YOUR OWN ENGAGEMENT RING** [adiamondisforever.com/dyoer]. Choose the metal and stones, and see what your dream ring will look like. Then compare it with similar designs or find a local jeweler who can sell you the ring you want.

Track Political Contributions

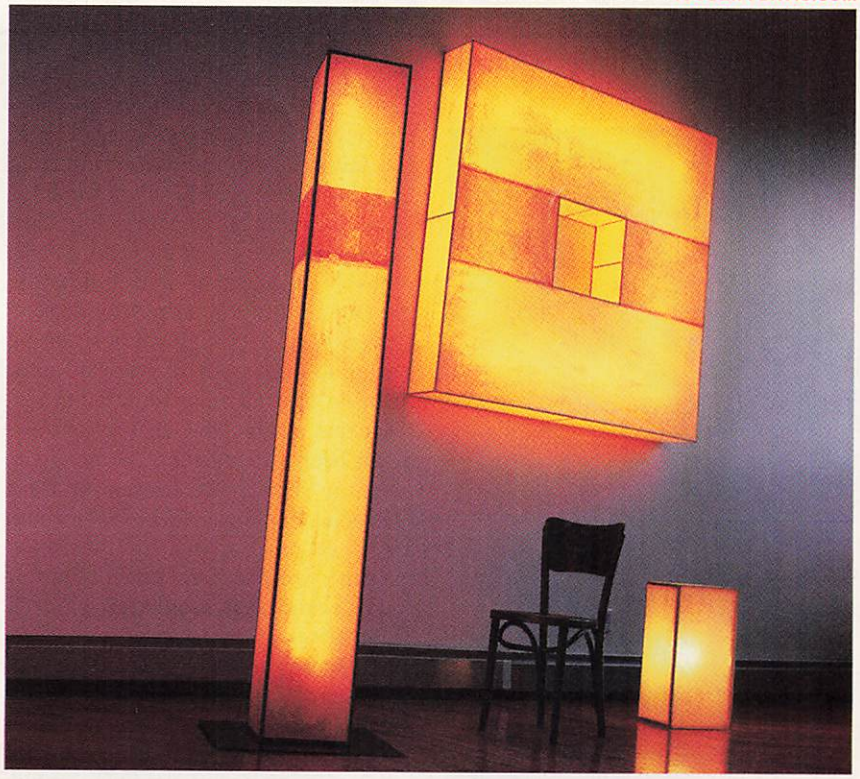
WHO HASN'T SUSPECTED THAT SOME POLITICIANS are really working just for their biggest contributors? Campaign financing has made a lot of people cynical about this country's entire political process. Now you can fight cynicism with fact: Go to **OPENSECRETS.ORG** for a guide to the money in American elections. Enter your ZIP code to uncover details about who's giving and who's getting in your city. You can also search by state or get fund-raising profiles by candidate.

Find Travel Buddies

GOING IT ALONE IS FINE FOR SOME PEOPLE, but if you feel it's unsafe, expensive (those "single supplements" on most group tours are a real drag), or just plain lonesome, look for a companion at **TRAVELCHUMS** [travelchums.com]. Register for free and search to find others who want to venture to the same destinations you do. You can narrow your search by a number of factors, including age, gender, and religion, and you can specify whether you're looking just for friendship or perhaps for a little romance, too.

DRIVER: ROBIN HILL/NONSTOCK

SEND US NEWS OF YOUR USEFUL FIND! WRITE TO IUS@ZIFFDAVIS.COM



JOSH MCHUGH

Light Up Your Life

ANYONE REDECORATING A HOME SPENDS hours worrying about paint, wallpaper, and flooring, but what about lighting? You can see different configurations at the **GE LIGHTING VIRTUAL HOUSE** [gelighting.com/na/virtualhouse]. Pick a room and use the Virtual Lighting Designer to alter the fixtures used for primary, secondary, and accent lighting to find the different effects you can achieve. It's no big surprise that you'll also get recommendations for the types of GE lightbulbs that offer the illumination you like.

Get a Fair Price

IF YOU'RE A FREQUENT BUYER OR SELLER AT online auctions, you know how prices can vary, even for the exact same item in similar condition. To find the current market value of a particular piece, search at **STRONG NUMBERS** [strongnumbers.com], a site that bills itself "The Blue Book for Everything." It scours auction sites, looking for the price histories of everything from cars and electronics to cameras and collectibles. Look through the categories for detailed charts showing high, low, and average prices for the past three months. You'll be a much smarter buyer and a more effective seller.

Listen to CEOs

STOCK-MARKET PLAYERS ARE ALWAYS LOOKing for good investment information, but they rarely get to hear from the executives of the companies in which they invest. **BESTCALLS.COM** provides that kind of access. The site archives company "conference calls" during which CEOs discuss earnings and future plans with stockholders and analysts. Search by name or ticker symbol to find recent calls in streaming audio form, and find schedules of upcoming calls. You can also register to get free e-mail notifications from the companies you specify.

Answer Nature's Call

IN AMERICA IT'S KNOWN AS THE REST ROOM; in England it's the W.C. But no matter what you call it, finding one can sometimes be a problem. Before the situation becomes dire, check out **THE BATHROOM DIARIES.COM** [thebathroomdiaries.com] to find clean, free rest rooms worldwide. Click on a U.S. state or a country to find one, or add your own listing—the site relies on contributed reviews and comments ("the atrium is nice"). The wireless Web may finally have found its killer app. What a relief...

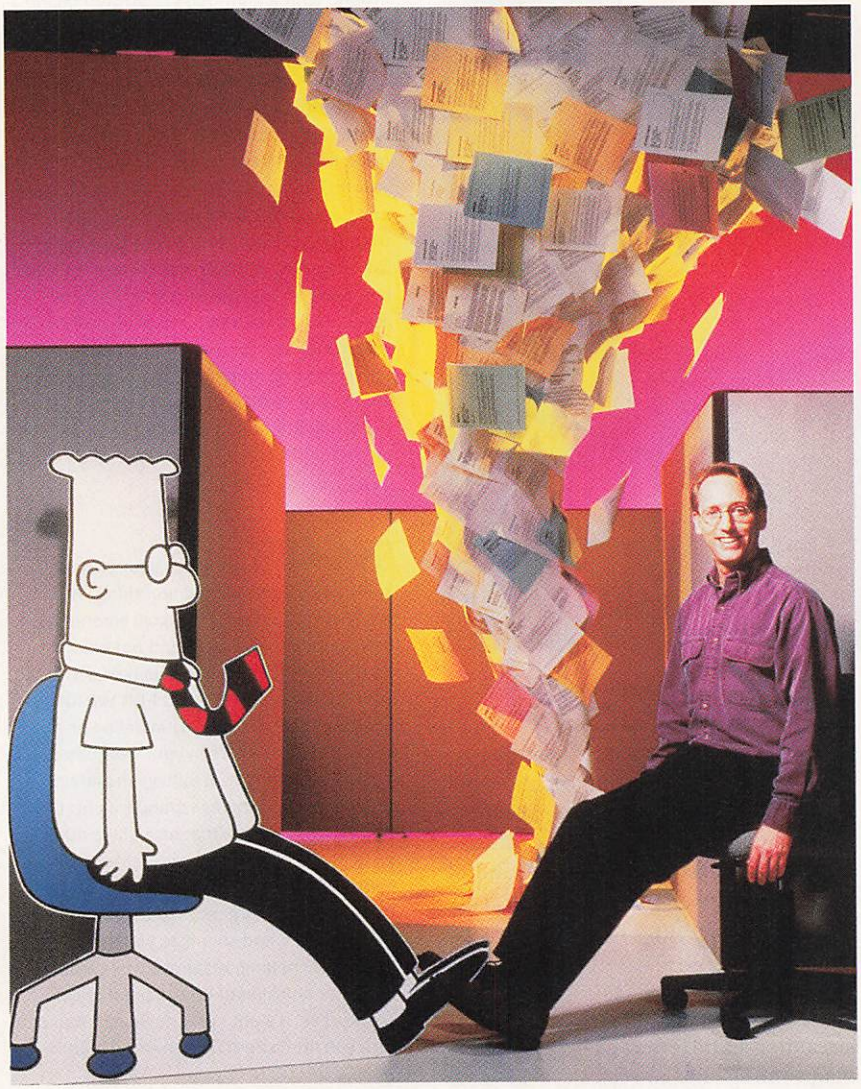
INCREDIBLY USEFUL DOWNLOADS

TALK TO YOURSELF Are you one of those type A people who walk around with a mini-tape recorder making "memos to self"? You can do the same thing while you're sitting in front of your computer with **AUDIO NOTES RECORDER** [xemicomputers.com], an extremely versatile voice recorder that requires nothing more than a decent microphone attached to your PC. In normal mode, you record, stop, and pause after activating the program from your system tray. If your work habits are Nixonian, you can use voice-operated recording to capture all the talk in your office while skipping periods of silence. Spy mode does the same thing but hides the app so no one knows it's there. You can share your voice notes with others by exporting messages as WAV files and attaching them to e-mails. *Free to try for 42 days; $19.90 to buy.*

SAVE A LIFE Suppose your coworker keeled over and stopped breathing. Would you know what to do? Medical emergencies can happen anywhere—and not always near a PC—but it certainly makes sense to have a copy of **ER-CPR-PC FOR WINDOWS** [cardiacsafecity.com] installed on a computer somewhere in your workplace. This interactive coach follows the latest American and Canadian standards for CPR, and you can use it either as a guide during an actual emergency or as a refresher course if you've already gone through CPR training. The emergency mode prompts you with graphics and sound as you assist victims of choking, respiratory or cardiac arrest, or any kind of unexplained unconsciousness. It's not every download that can turn you into a hero. *Free to try (three times); $19.95 to buy.*

PLAN YOUR FINANCES Everyone worries about next month's bills, but what about next year's bills, and what about five or even 30 years down the road? If you've been neglecting your long-term finances, it's well worth checking out **J&L FINANCIAL PLANNER 3.4** [home.earthlink.net/~jwoomer], a download that walks you through the bottom-line implications of buying a home, saving for college, setting up a comfortable retirement, and keeping up with taxes. The program lets you run multiple what-if scenarios based on your own guesses about your future earnings potential, your life span, and, of course, inflation. Output comes as either basic text or in bar, line, and pie charts, so it's easy to eyeball the rest of your financial life, from here to eternity. *Free to try; $20 to buy.* —DON WILLMOTT

NEWSMAKERS IN THE ONLINE COMMUNITY BY JEREMY CAPLAN



Where the ideas are

Cartoonist **Scott Adams** *hosts a Web site for modern-day Rube Goldberg's*

CAPITALIZING ON THE SUCCESS OF DILBERT.COM, THE WEB SITE BASED on his comic strip and its slacker-icon main character, cartoonist Scott Adams recently launched **LAZY ENTREPRENEUR** [dilbert.com/comics/dilbert/lazyentrepreneur]. Here, *Dilbert* aficionados are free to share their zaniest and most clever ideas, and ironically enough, it's the couch potatoes who decide what gets invented—or not invented, judging from the site's slogan, "All talk, no funding."

Lazy Entrepreneur is a sounding board for innovations that their creators will probably never get around to developing. One contributor proposed a dog collar equipped with a global positioning system to keep track of wayward pets. Another offered an automated gravestone that would thank visitors for flowers or beep at trespassers. Some of the inventors seem a little too lazy for their own good, like the one who dreamed up a bedsheet-on-a-roll that, like the revolving paper toilet-covers at finer public rest rooms everywhere, would refresh itself automatically.

Dilbert may be a one-trick working stiff, but Adams himself is a hypnotist, restaurateur, and food-industry executive. In recent years, Adams has built his renowned comic strip into an entertainment empire that encompasses video games, television shows, a line of frozen food products—including a vegetarian burrito called the Dilberito—and, of course, an insanely successful Web site or two.

Y-LIFE: Do you feel more free to "cross the line" when you're penning your online strip as compared with the print version?

ADAMS: There are times when I think, *I'm not going to get away with this one, but I'll get away with it on the Web.* So I draw it how I envision it and then do a tamer version for the newspaper. Sometimes the papers censor the print version. For example, a panel once showed Wally's butt crack—it was tiny, just an eighth of a line, but it had to be erased for print. Someday I'd like to test whether people who read only the online version would be corrupted in some way, in order to see if people saw who saw a butt crack grew up to be serial killers or maybe Florida election officials.

Y-LIFE: How do you keep your material fresh?

ADAMS: Most of my material comes from people telling me about their hideous bosses. And patterns arise that you never would have guessed. For example, I recently got all these messages from people saying that popcorn in the office was being banned because of the smell. People

STEVE LABADESSA/CORBIS OUTLINE

thought it was an oddity of their workplace, but it was happening everywhere.

Y-LIFE: You say "everywhere," but are *Dilbert* and Dilbert.com popular abroad?

ADAMS: Yes. Business has become the universal language, and *Dilbert* represents and translates that. A *Dilbert* TV show is popular in Finland. And I get hyperpolite e-mails from Japanese translators asking, "What does 'wedgie' mean in panel two of your last cartoon?"

Y-LIFE: Has Dilbert.com faced critics?

ADAMS: For a while the site was getting blocked [by corporate IT departments]. It was seen as entertainment and was getting lumped in with Playboy.com and sports sites. But people would write in and rat out their bosses for blocking it, and some eventually decided it was okay, because it was "work-related material."

Y-LIFE: What was the inspiration for Lazy Entrepreneur?

ADAMS: Everybody in the world has an idea for a million-dollar product. But it's dangerous to start a new company, and people are lazy, so they need a place online that allows someone else to make their product so they can buy it.

Y-LIFE: How does the site work?

ADAMS: People post their ideas online and others criticize them. People love to criticize. It's their favorite thing, not counting sex or eating. A lot of the people who contribute ideas are engineers, and most are above average in intelligence. And many of them feel that they have a better idea for everything and they'd like to express it.

Y-LIFE: What are some of the best ideas so far?

ADAMS: A lot of people want to see a way to program a VCR from a phone. And someone proposed a "cubicle buzzard" that gets clamped on top of cubicles of employees who are gearing up for retirement. I liked the idea of an automated gravestone. You'd set up video clips of yourself before you die, and then use a motion sensor to activate it postmortem. If someone stepped near the gravestone, your face would pop up, saying, "Get off my grave!" Or with a little voice recognition, it would recognize "How are you?" and reply "Not so good. Still dead."

Y-LIFE: How did you react to the arrival of the Net in the workplace when you were doing the nine-to-five thing?

ADAMS: At Pacific Bell, where I was working in the early 1990s, we were trying to sell people ISDN, and nobody wanted it at first. So we'd give them examples of what they could use it for. First we'd demonstrate how you could use it to transfer calls, or send two sound packets over one line, and their eyes would glaze over. Then we'd show them Mosaic and the World Wide Web, and people jumped out of their seats. The only things we could show them at the time were some dinosaurs and a few gems from the Smithsonian, but people were amazed by it.

'People post their ideas online and others criticize them. People love to criticize. It's their favorite thing, not counting sex or eating'

I realized that it was something significant, and back in April 1993 I started to distribute my comics on AOL, which wasn't that big at the time. *Dilbert* was the first syndicated comic on the Web.

Y-LIFE: Has the Net spread your fame?

ADAMS: Being a cartoonist and a short, balding middle-aged guy combine to provide me anonymity. I can't even get service at the deli counter. It's like being the great invisible man. Maybe if I looked like Dilbert, things might be different. Still, my e-mail is public and I answer thousands of reader messages every year. I like keeping in touch with readers.

Y-LIFE: You answer thousands of messages? You sound as if you're a power-user extraordinaire.

ADAMS: I literally keep a computer at each hand [a Mac and a Windows machine]. I'm often downloading e-mail on one and surfing the Web on the other. I have a high-speed connection and check the weather, TV, movies, stocks, banking...and I use the online dictionary. I recently talked my mother through hooking up NetMeeting online—we have Web cams set up. Hearing your mother talk about IP addresses can really blow you away.

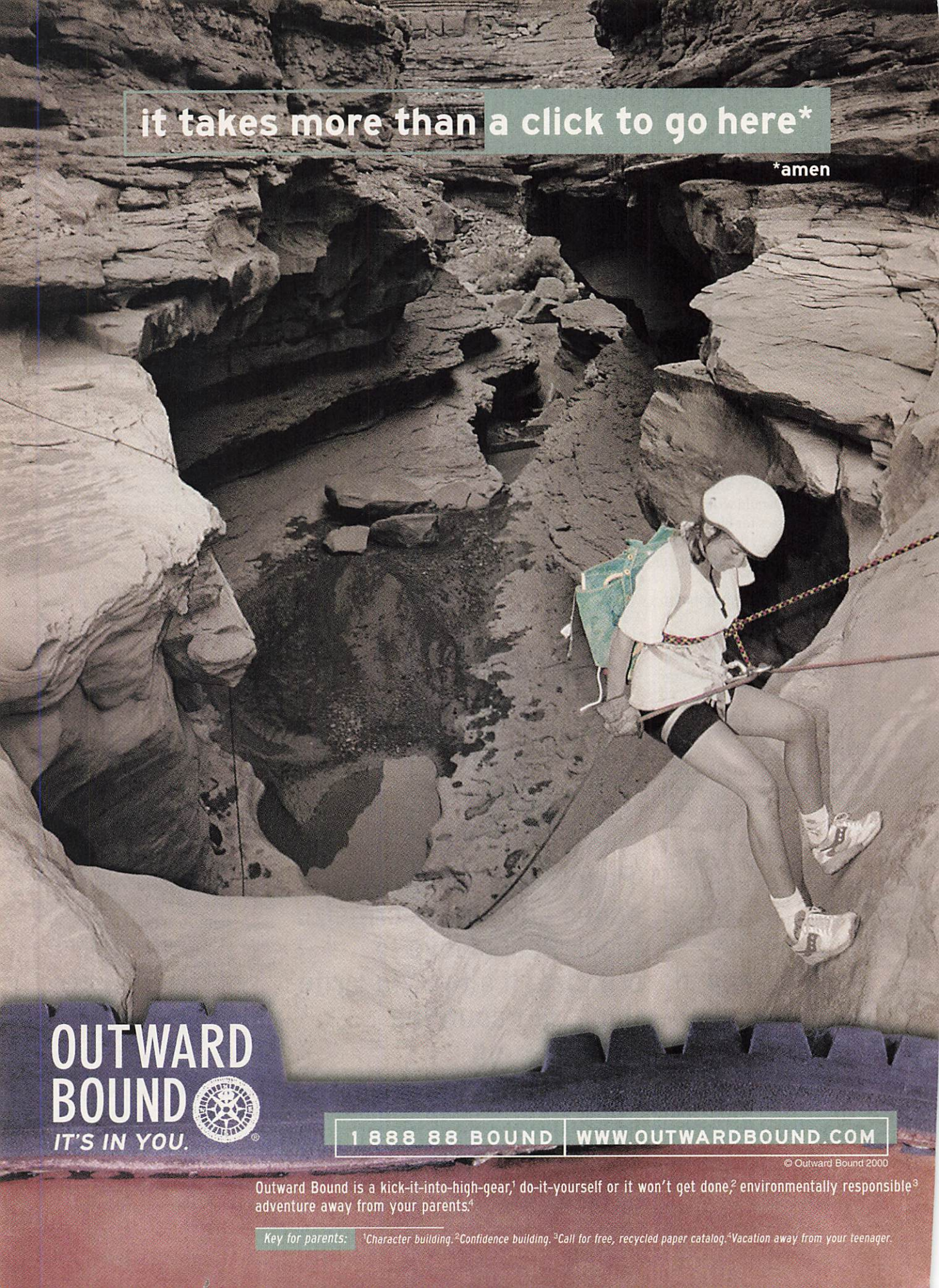
Y-LIFE: Do you use a computer to draw?

ADAMS: I start in pencil. Then I ink the drawing, and then scan it and type in the text with a special *Dilbert* font. Then I clean it up and edit it. The process is two-thirds manual and one-third online.

Y-LIFE: Does the Net pose a threat to newspaper comic strips?

ADAMS: They won't survive if they don't change. But not everything new replaces the old. Television didn't replace radio. Video didn't replace movies. And there's something satisfying about holding a newspaper in your hand and reading the same stories other people have read in the same way. But maybe there'll be a partnership of sorts. It wouldn't surprise me if newspapers became primarily teasers for fuller material on the Web.

UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE INC.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WE TEST ONE CATEGORY OF SITES IN DEPTH...ENVELOPES, PLEASE BY DEAN FOUST

Personal Finance

UNTIL RECENTLY, MOST SMALL INVESTORS VIEWED THE INTERNET as one big Sony PlayStation and took advantage of the $7 trades offered by online brokers to flip in and out of stocks at a breakneck pace. Sorry, people, but game over. With many of the high-flying tech issues having crashed back to earth, the days of making easy money in the stock market may be behind us. But that doesn't mean the Internet is no longer a money machine.

If a new era of austerity looms on the horizon, then the Net may be more useful than ever, helping consumers get the most out of their hard-earned bucks by managing their finances better and more cheaply than they could in the offline world. And if playing the stock market solo seems more treacherous than before, the Web can hook you up with professional-caliber planning sites that offer sage advice on how to make your nest egg grow.

Routine financial services have also matured. The Web is now better prepared to handle time-consuming tasks like paying bills, filing your taxes, and shopping for a loan—leaving you with more free time (and money) to pursue the activities that are most important to you. From specialty sites that do one thing really well to hubs that handle the gamut of your finance needs, our Gold Star Sites can help enrich your life, not to mention your wallet.

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Best Overall

SMARTMONEY.COM
[smartmoney.com]

Whether you're saving for your kids' college tuition, nursing care for your aging mother, or—oh, yeah—your own retirement, SmartMoney is your best bet for financial counsel. The site deftly covers the bottom line of nearly every major life event. It also provides excellent investment analysis, as well as the Net's best tools for computing everything from how much house or car you can afford to how much you should be setting aside for your golden years. New to money management? Enroll in SmartMoney University for crash courses in topics such as handling debt and leveraging 401(k)s. (For an overview of the competition, see "Report Card," page 78.)

Best for Women

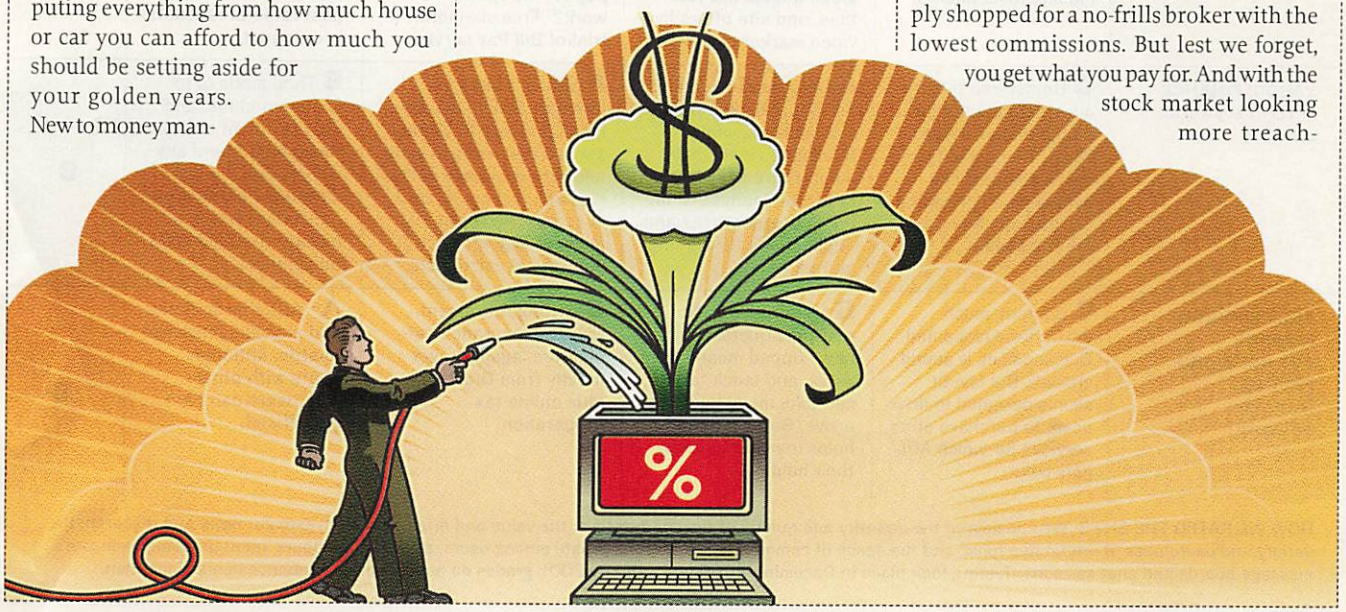
FINANCIALMUSE
[financialmuse.com]

In generations past, handling the family finances was viewed as hubby's job. Well, Ozzie, this ain't the 1950s anymore. With the number of single women in society up sharply, there's a growing need for investment advice that isn't geared to the testosterone crowd. Financialmuse provides a broad array of monetary resources tailored to the needs of women, without the patronizing approach that too many female-oriented sites take. Beyond good fundamental fare, such as Investment Basics, you'll get the realities of prenuptial agreements, weddings, kids, divorce, and—should it come to that—life as a single gal again.

Best Online Broker

CHARLES SCHWAB
[schwab.com]

When stocks looked like helium balloons that could only go up, many investors simply shopped for a no-frills broker with the lowest commissions. But lest we forget, you get what you pay for. And with the stock market looking more treach-



PETER HOEY

erous, it's time to demand more from your broker (as we did, bumping E*Trade from the spot it occupied last year). With its breadth of offerings for novices and pros alike, Schwab strikes the best balance in cyberspace. Commissions—which begin at $29.95—aren't the cheapest you'll find, but the site's sophisticated research and financial planning tools go well beyond the skimpy offerings of most online brokers. And Schwab provides more than just virtual support: You can walk in the doors of 365 branches nationwide, and reps actually answer the phones when you call for help.

Best Bill-Pay Service

PAYTRUST
[paytrust.com]
Weary of those late-night runs to the post office to get the mortgage check out on time? There's a better way to pay your bills. Unlike traditional online bill-pay services, which still require you to bundle up your paper bills and manually enter each payment authorization into your PC, Paytrust conveniently delivers your major bills via e-mail. Then you okay each payment with a mouse click or two—a service well worth the monthly $8.95 fee. You can even ask the site to nudge you with e-mail reminders as each bill's due date draws near.

Best Mutual Fund Hub

MORNINGSTAR.COM
[morningstar.com]
If the wild swings in stocks suddenly make those staid mutual funds look soooo appealing, let Morningstar be your guide. The site

REPORT CARD Grading the Top Personal Finance Hubs

THE BASICS	HOW TO	RESEARCH	TOOLS	COMMUNITY	OVERALL
SMARTMONEY.COM [smartmoney.com]	**A** Strong, street-smart primers, including curriculum of SmartMoney University. Q&As with experts. Site gives one reader a real-life "financial makeover" each month.	**A** Stellar commentary and stock picks from SmartMoney's team of skilled editors. The scrolling News Ticker and 3-D graphs of market activity are truly innovative, though prone to crashes.	**A** The best set of tools on the Net: calculators and worksheets galore for everything from building a model portfolio to determining the current value of your home.	**B-** The weak link: Message boards are hard to find and lightly trafficked; Microsoft folder has seen few postings since last August.	**A-**
FOOL.COM [fool.com]	**B+** Still the best starting point for beginning investors, with Fool's School and other primers written in site's trademark witty prose. One concern: Ads are invading editorial content.	**B-** News and market updates. But collapse of Fool's acclaimed model portfolio in 2000—which was top-heavy with go-go tech stocks—raises questions about the site's vaunted stock picks.	**B** Mostly run-of-the-mill calculators purchased from outside sources. The one bright spot: The Fool's PEGulator lets you determine the fair value of a stock.	**A** Still the Web's liveliest message boards, with more than 2 million postings, most in civil tones. Registered users can track favorite topics and posters.	**B+**
MSN MONEY CENTRAL [moneycentral.com]	**B** Authoritative advice from pros. But MSN blurs the lines between independent editorial and content from financial providers like Fidelity Investments.	**B** Increasingly, news and analysis comes not from MSN staff but from outside sources like TheStreet.com and *The Industry Standard*. But stock quotes are real-time, and site offers live-video market coverage.	**A** Strong lineup of tools led by best portfolio manager on the Web. Innovative calculators address vexing questions such as "Does it pay for my spouse to work?" Free six-month trial of Bill Pay service.	**C** Stock-picking contests and chats with MSN editors are the real draws. But message boards are poorly organized and less active, and archive of past radio broadcasts is outdated.	**B**
YAHOO! FINANCE [finance.yahoo.com]	**C** Uninspired tutorials—mostly a hodgepodge of content from B-list financial sites—provide superficial overviews of investing, car buying, taxes, and other issues.	**B** Delayed stock quotes, not the real-time prices available elsewhere. Real-time video commentary from market pros via FinanceVision. Posts prospectuses and applications for leading mutual funds.	**A** Yahoo!'s historic strength. Online bill payment, and new PayDirect service that lets you send and receive money online via bank and credit card accounts. Powerful account aggregator, plus lots of calculators.	**B** Thousands of investment clubs, and best lineup of real-time chats found anywhere. Still, active message boards aren't policed very well, so beware the Wild West atmosphere.	**B**
AOL PERSONAL FINANCE AOL KEYWORD: FINANCE [quicken.aol.com]	**C** Content, much drawn from respected Quicken.com, is sound enough. But layout seems designed to drive users to purchase other services for which AOL gets a cut.	**B-** A mixed bag: No real-time quotes, market news ripped mostly from wires, and stock "alerts" can take many hours to arrive. But Evaluator helps investors assess their holdings.	**B** Strong retirement, tax, and insurance calculators, again drawn mostly from Quicken, plus online tax preparation.	**A-** AOL's forte: Active and engaging message boards, although chats with other AOL users can be superficial.	**B-**

HOW WE RATED THE SITES: We considered the quantity and quality of finance tutorials; the value and originality of investment news and research; the variety and usefulness of interactive tools; and the sense of community and level of debate among users, derived from hours spent perusing each site's message boards and chat sessions. Testing took place in December 2000 and January 2001; grades do not reflect any enhancements since then.

offers—via a new, cleaner layout—helpful tutorials on picking a fund, snapshot reports on more than 10,000 funds, commentary from a crack team of editors, plus active message boards (called Conversations). But the real draw is the plethora of interactive tools that let you screen for funds that meet your exacting standards, and help you determine whether your various funds hold many of the same stocks (leaving you less diversified than you might think). For these and other advanced functions, however, be prepared to fork out $10 a month or $99 a year.

Best Tax Advice

TAXPLANET.COM

[taxplanet.com]

If doing the "1040 tango" every April leaves you twisted in knots, beam up to TaxPlanet for the smartest advice on the Web. Former *New York Times* columnist Gary Klott provides invaluable tax-saving tips and clarification of thorny issues—such as whether you can deduct that expensive wardrobe required for your new sales job. You'll find all IRS forms and schedules, handy tax tables and tax calendars, and links to the relevant IRS publications. Klott also updates readers on the latest tax news out of Washington.

Best Insurance Broker

INSWEB

[insweb.com]

Shopping for insurance doesn't have to be as much of a pain as, oh, root-canal surgery. InsWeb lets you put your request for auto, life, health, and other major forms of insurance in front of 42 competing carriers and, in a growing number of instances, returns a binding quote within minutes. If you're unsure how much coverage you actually need, the site provides buying primers and tools to determine a vehicle's crashworthiness. It also offers an innovative CoverageAssist feature: Choose a desired level of coverage and the site automatically fills in the other fields in your quote request.

Best Online Bank

CITI

[citibank.com]

Like Schwab, here's another case where bricks beat clicks: Venerable Citibank's Citi vaults past reigning champ CompuBank thanks to its strong lineup of standard services, along with cutting-edge features such as an account aggregator that shows all of your bank, brokerage, and other accounts on a single screen. Perhaps more important, Citi's security is more bulletproof than that of many cyberbanks: It zips e-mail alerts to customers following any significant account activity, and logs users off after a few minutes of inactivity.

Best Loan Source

GETSMART.COM

[getsmart.com]

Whether you're in the market for a mortgage or a new credit card, GetSmart is the next best thing to cash in the bank. As the Net's leading loan source, it has more than 100 participating lenders jockeying for your business. Prospective homeowners can apply for a loan by answering questions on just two screens—usually in less than 60 seconds. And the site now provides instant approval for various home-equity and credit card loans.

Best Financial Planner

FINANCIAL ENGINES

[financialengines.com]

Not sure where to put your nest egg? You've come to the right place. Developed by Nobel Prize–winning economist William Sharpe, the site helps you meet your retirement goals. Input your income and other personal data, along with your holdings in any of 11,000 mutual funds. Financial Engines will run sophisticated probability analyses to determine the odds that you'll achieve your monetary dreams. The preliminary report is free, but you'll have to pay for updates, or for fund recommendations. (For more on financial planning, see "A Closer Look," below.)

A Closer Look Financial Planning

During the recent bull market, it was amateur hour on Wall Street, with every small investor trying to day trade his or her way to riches. But given the recent downdraft in the stock market, it pays to have a long-range game plan. Fortunately, there are a growing number of sites that offer online planning services. Most of them aren't free. But then, neither is your future.

FINANCIAL ENGINES
[financialengines.com]
How It Works: Complete a detailed Q&A and site builds a retirement savings plan based on mutual funds in your company's 401(k) program.
Time to Complete: 45 minutes.
Cost: Free for anyone whose employer has purchased Financial Engines' 401(k)-advisory service. Otherwise, $14.95 (standard service) or $39.95 (deluxe) per quarter.
Features: Site runs thousands of different economic scenarios and offers alternative portfolios based on variables you can adjust. Scorecards rate 11,000-plus mutual funds.
The Verdict: One of our Gold Star sites.

QUICKEN 401K ADVISOR
[quicken.com/retirement/planning]
How It Works: Complete a detailed Q&A and site calculates the chances you'll meet your retirement goals. You can also access human planners via chat or phone for detailed advice.
Time to Complete: 40 minutes.
Cost: Web-based service, as well as initial phone consultation with a planner, is free; afterward, $19.95 a month for unlimited phone consultations.
Features: Quicken's database provides preloaded information for more than 1,000 corporate retirement plans. New technology lets both users and a live financial planner view the same pages on the Web site simultaneously.
The Verdict: Pricey service still may be the best option for individuals whose company 401(k) plan is covered.

DIRECTADVICE.COM
[directadvice.com]
How It Works: Complete a detailed Q&A and site builds a savings plan and recommends mutual funds to help you achieve your goals.
Time to Complete: 45 minutes to one hour.
Cost: $75 annually for initial plan and unlimited updates.
Features: Flexible program allows users to incorporate multiple life goals. But many funds are not covered.
The Verdict: Great for building comprehensive life plans, although confusing Q&A can be time-consuming. Limited fund selection.

MORNINGSTAR CLEARFUTURE
[morningstar.com/cover/clearfuture.html]
How It Works: Complete the Q&A and site recommends a plan based on mutual funds offered by your employer's 401(k) plan.
Time to Complete: 15 minutes.
Cost: Free for anyone whose employer has purchased ClearFuture's 401(k)-advisory service. Otherwise, $7.95 per quarter, or included as part of Morningstar's $9.95-a-month (or $99-yearly) premium service.
Features: Site didn't recognize many of the mutual funds offered in our own 401(k) plan. But ClearFuture does offer a separate service customized to more than 7,000 corporate 401(k) plans at [cf.morningstar.com].
The Verdict: Okay for young savers who just want a snapshot of their financial picture, but inadequate for serious planning.

STYLIST: JENNIFER KATZ; HAIR: SAM LEONARDI; MAKEUP: LIA VAN DE DONK

THE NEXT PICTURE SHOW

A lot of people have gone bust trying to put entertainment on the Web. But beyond the Hollywood paranoia, there are some new stars out there—and one of them may be you

BY RANDALL LANE

PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGH KRETSCHMER

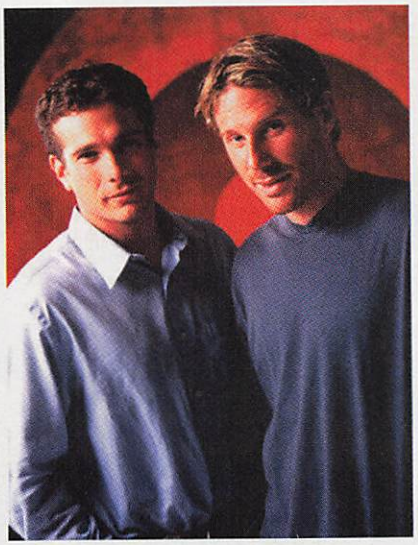
The Sundance Film Festival is a poorly named event. Sundance is a ski area, but nobody who attends goes skiing. It's a film festival, yet few bother to see many movies. What Sundance attendees—actors and directors, producers and executives—really do all week is gossip and network, preferably in a chalet with freely flowing booze and a roaring fire. And since it takes place in January, if you keep your ears open and your mouth shut, you'll get a good idea of what's going to happen in Hollywood over the next year.

This winter, the word from the mouths of Hollywood's whales and minnows alike was a familiar one: *Internet.* **MIRAMAX CAFE** launches a pay-per-view movie download system. Richard Linklater premieres two films he edited on a home computer. The giant Sundance Digital Center displays the latest in online movie technologies and applications to wide-eyed audiences. And the festival itself, along with other fests (including *Y-Life*'s own, in March) has gotten into the business of showcasing a number of films over the Web. New this year, the **SUNDANCE ONLINE FILM FESTIVAL** coincides with the offline festival. This may seem a bit strange, considering that 2000 was a disaster for anyone trying to push video over the Web. Dozens of companies failed, including such high-profile ventures as DEN, Pseudo, and Pop.com—the last of these featuring the biggest names in the business: Steven Spielberg, David Geffen, Ron Howard, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and Brian Grazer.

But could this just possibly be the year that the big show on your little screen begins in earnest? While DEN and company were failing, the number of people with high-speed Net access more than doubled last year, reaching nearly 12 million home users in the U.S., according to Nielsen//NetRatings, and the average new computer now comes with considerably more memory. These two facts conspire to make producing, distributing, and watching video via computer a reality. Yes, we're a long way from the hundreds of millions of people who view television or attend movies, but we're nudging toward a critical mass.

The Internet film movement's march toward that milestone will catch a big break this year. If Hollywood's writers and actors go on strike in, respectively, May and July (and it looks as if they will, despite some recent headway in negotiations), figure that for at least six months no movies will be shot, no TV sitcoms or dramas produced, and no scripts purchased. With all sides heavily bunkered, traditional Hollywood will grind to a halt.

Digital Hollywood, however, may end up doing just fine. Web sites aren't covered under the current contracts, which means that some of Hollywood's best talent may think about giving the Net a try. Faced with nothing but reruns on TV and a slowdown of new movies in theaters, ordinary viewers will also begin to tune in, especially if A-list writers, directors, and actors begin popping up online. Says director Robert Rodriguez, who broke into Hollywood famously with the $7,000 *El Mariachi* and currently has the special-effects-laden *Spy Kids* coming to theaters, "When everyone is asleep, it's the perfect time for revolution."



PLAYERS: (From left) Jon Favreau and Vince Vaughn, seen here in *Swingers,* will appear together again in Favreau's highly wired *Made,* a gangster comedy. The Romp's Bruce Forman and Eric Eisner admittedly aim to appeal to the lowest common denominator—and then some.

SWINGERS: FOTO FANTASIES

The R-word, of course, has been spoken before, but this time it may be for real, albeit less revolution and more evolution. Venturing out from Sundance to the epicenters of this sea change—Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York—we found five major trends, all taking off right now. Last year was all courtship and flirting, but 2001 may be the year motion pictures and the Net finally get hitched.

ACT ONE

The Napsterization of the movie business is here—and it's huge

Jon Favreau hails from Queens, but he's become the quintessential L.A. player. An actor-director-writer, he has enough hyphens for the town, and they're all legitimate. He wrote and starred with his pal Vince Vaughn in *Swingers,* the ultimate L.A. flick. He's at Skybar, the *uber*-hip joint on the Sunset Strip that boasts beautiful babies and a jaw-slacking view of the Southern California basin. He's in his adopted element, but he hasn't lost his New York bluntness: "What happened with Napster," Favreau says, his dark *Sopranos* sweatshirt dimming as lights pop on across the valley, "has everyone here scared out of their minds."

And well they should be. As many as 400,000 movies (from

clips and shorts to full-length features) are downloaded every day, two of the more popular being *The Matrix* and *Mission: Impossible 2*. True, that's small potatoes compared with the estimated 50 million music files that once switched hands daily on Napster alone. But when you consider that the average movie is perhaps 90 minutes long, compared with some four minutes for the average song, the time spent with so-called pirated movies may have already caught up with music. Hollywood executives have been bracing for the day when *Cast Away* is as available for free downloading as "The Real Slim Shady."

Their fears may soon be realized. The technology for sharing a movie is no different than for a song; **GNUTELLA** already allows for it, while the old Napster just needed an infusion of Wrapster (a free program that allowed it to share other files besides MP3s). The question was simply when processing power, bandwidth connections, and computer screens would all become big enough to make watching video on your desktop feasible.

A 90-minute movie can now be compressed to 500 megabytes. A high-speed connection can get you that movie in 30 minutes—not fast, but no more time than for downloading a big piece of software. And the screen is now irrelevant. DVD burners are the hot new gadget for 2001; Apple's G4 even comes with the device installed. (For more on this, see "Tinseltown for the Taking," page 92.) Download, burn, then watch it on your big screen—you don't even need to keep the file. Suddenly your computer can become a pirate video factory, churning out an endless number of DVDs. Eventually, you may not even need a burner. A site called **XIO** already sells a gizmo that, by wireless transfer, turns your TV into a computer video monitor. No wonder Hollywood's nervous.

Of course, Hollywood was also nervous when television came out. And when cable popped up. And when VCRs invaded. Napster upended the music business—yet music sales have never been higher. "The music industry will always be the first line of defense," says Favreau. "They're the pawns, the fodder." But compared with the music industry, Hollywood maintains a key mental advantage. Music feels free. You get it on the radio—four hours every week in the car alone, if you're like most Americans. But you're used to paying for movies, whether in the theater, at Blockbuster, or through premium cable.

Music feels free. You get it on the radio—four hours every week in the car alone. But you're used to paying for movies, at the theater, at Blockbuster, or through premium cable

Maybe that's why much of Hollywood is wising up and working with the new technology rather than against it. Miramax's Sundance-timed Internet release of *Guinevere* was the first of a dozen movies it will offer using encryption technology from **SIGHTSOUND.COM**, allowing users a timed, 24-hour viewing license for $3.49. Jack Valenti, the president of the Motion Picture Association of America, predicted that same day that many of the major studios will follow suit this year. "You don't fight file-sharing technology," says Scott Sander, SightSound Technologies' cofounder. "You don't fight Microsoft. You don't fight the consumer. Otherwise, it's not going to be pretty."

Sander's proposition is simple: "Do you want to pay a few bucks to not break the law, get good quality, no virus, and not tie your line up at a file-sharing site?"

But even if everything works perfectly, piracy by people who want free movies will still be largely unstoppable. Just one store-bought DVD, one bootleg video, one hacked download, and the genie is out of the bottle. A big test comes this June, when a certain movie featuring a certain buxom video-game character hits screens. *Tomb Raider*, starring Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft (see "Très Jolie," page 86), "will be the single most pirated movie in the history of the world," says one Digital Hollywood chief executive, who asked that his name be withheld for fear of infuriating Paramount. "The chatrooms are already flying. They're so ready for it." With that release, the Napsterization of the movie business will have officially commenced.

ACT TWO

Is the free ride over?

As Eric Eisner talks about the future of the Web, flanked by a life-size blowup doll and scrawled blue-chalk graffiti that runs up and down the brick walls of his site's offices, a visitor can only wonder: *What would Daddy think?* Daddy in this case is Michael Eisner, chairman and CEO of Walt Disney, protector of the virtue of Mickey Mouse, Snow White, and the Little Mermaid. The younger Eisner and a partner run **THE ROMP**, a site for young men that figures out the lowest common denominator and then shoots below it. Its top shows are *Booty Call*, which lets you help a pimp named Jake score, and *Bill and Ted*, which features cartoon Clinton and Kennedy as stoner sidekicks.

But just as the elder Eisner understands Main Street, U.S.A., the younger Eisner, 27, and his partner, Bruce Forman, 29, understand fraternity row. *Booty Call* attracts 1 million unique users a month. And starting this month, they'll have to pay three to five bucks a month to see all of it.

"It's one Taco Bell meal, two nacho grandes," says Eric Eisner, clad in baggy jeans and a green sweater. "If you're complaining about it being too much, yet you have a computer with broadband access, well, you're not being very reasonable." Forman, the (relatively) buttoned-down one of the pair, adds: "The jokers are no longer wild all over the place. The free ride's over."

While it's easy to shrug off the plight of the failing dot-com companies, there's a real effect on consumers. Companies that broadcast original Net programming must now figure out a way to actually make money. Pay-per-view online will remain the exclusive purview of live sports and big-budget movies. Charging a subscription price—just as Showtime, or *Sports Illustrated*, or a hundred profitable porn sites do—will become a more common solution for the Romps of the Net. "Whether it's HBO or a cell phone, we're pretty comfortable paying a subscription fee," says Michael J. Wolf, a senior partner of the media and entertainment group at Booz Allen & Hamilton. "Membership models will absolutely work on the Internet."

Confessions of a would-be movie pirate

One *Y-Life* editor's quest to download—gasp!—*The Phantom Menace*

BY JOSH ROBERTSON

Not everyone got to see *The Phantom Menace* the day it opened back in May 1999. I did, but only because a friend won a radio contest. Everyone else had to wait in line for hours with light-saber-toting weirdos. Or you needed an Internet connection. ■ Say what? Yes, you could get the movie online, or so it was rumored. Back then, the only film I'd seen online was a clip of a zookeeper having a bad day in the elephant house—I had never downloaded a full-length picture. So I set out to change that. *Episode I* seemed an obvious place to start.

A Google search for *Phantom Menace download* returned nearly 20,000 results. The first was a gaming site, but the second, a discussion board posting from September 1999, seemed to have what I wanted: ***DOWNLOAD STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE

The URL ended in *.fr*—France. Things that aren't legal in the U.S. often are legal in France. But "server too busy" messages led me back to the discussion board. After reading dozens of posts like "I watched star wars as a kid. phantom menace is great! please make more sequls!!!", I decided this wasn't the elusive lair of lawless whiz kids I was seeking.

I then found a Tripod page called the Phantom Menace Download. It asked me to click on an AllAdvantage banner. I got an operation timed-out error. I then followed a link to the guy's home page, where he confessed, "I'm sorry, this is a fake site. I just put it on to get people to come to this page." Pathetic.

Further sifting through the Google results proved fruitless. I started clicking on anything in a foreign language. Swedish, Portuguese, Polish—sometimes, things that are illegal in the U.S. are legal in Sweden, Portugal, and Poland. But no...more gaming sites.

Soon, I had located a few underground primers on the art of capturing bootleg films. I wasn't going to get a movie straight off a site; I'd get the address of a file transfer protocol (FTP) site, from which I'd download many big files that I'd then stitch back together. Bootlegged files of all kinds are known as "warez." Some of the formats I'd be dealing with: MPEGs and AVIs cloned from DVD, DivX, or VHS.

So I crammed the Google window with these terms: *ftp warez DVD DivX*, and I came up with sites hawking, as it were, their warez. Pop-ups everywhere, fake links, and no movies. Then I found a site called **XS 4_ALL** [kickme.to/xs4all].

XS 4_ALL (apparently unrelated to the Dutch ISP XS4ALL) does not store movie files; it gives FTP addresses where you can find movies, MP3s, and games. But after perusing a few FTP archives, I abandoned my dream of finding *The Phantom Menace*. FTPs are a crapshoot. Sometimes you get MP3s. Sometimes you get software. Sometimes you get *Family Guy* episodes.

I found *The Sixth Day* but couldn't download it. I found *Unbreakable*, but the slow file transfer rate meant a 10-day download. So what *could* I get?

Bring It On, the cheerleader movie with Kirsten Dunst. Within nine hours, I was watching prancing young girls in pleated skirts. I've had worse times. But the film had been taken from a "screener" tape, so the quality was poorer than VHS, and "You are committing a felony by watching this film" crawled across the screen.

The experience was exciting nonetheless, and before the *Bring It On* nymphets had reached nationals, I was cruising FTP sites again. I found *X-Men*, which had an encouraging "DVD" in the file name. This took only four hours to download, and the picture looked great. Two days later I snagged *Vertical Limit*, then *Charlie's Angels*....

My FTP adventure was pretty retro in terms of technology. People shared MP3s with FTP sites before Napster, so I decided to try CuteMX, sometimes called "Napster for movies." With CuteMX, you search for the file you want, then download it from another user. Unless you're looking for porn (which you'd never do), you probably won't find what you want. If you do, the size of bootlegged films presents problems. Getting a three-minute song on Napster can be hard; transferring a 450MB movie using CuteMX is a miracle.

Hunting pirated movies online can be fun; the cheap thrill of getting a movie off the Net almost makes up for the probably cruddy image. But *Bring It On* was not *The Phantom Menace*. With Napster, you had access to a vast library of music. Searching for bootlegged films is like snooping around someone else's rec room, at least for now. You might find something halfway interesting, but you probably won't find what you're looking for.

FRANCISCO CACERES

Of course, just as it is on television, most of the entertainment available on the Web will still be free, driven by ad revenue, often in the form of bits of streaming media. Ironically, these ad-based companies welcome and even promote file-sharing technologies like Napster, which serve only to disseminate their product and increase the eyeballs viewing the ads. "It's like turning a piece of entertainment into a grass fire," says John Evershed, CEO of Mondo Media, a San Francisco–based animation company that syndicates its cartoons, each with an embedded 12-second ad, to more than 30 sites. These ads will become harder to skip through as the companies get more sophisticated. One of the sponsors of Mondo's popular *Thugs on Film* series is Altoids, which the main characters, Stubby and Cecil, have been known to munch on during the show. Invasive? Perhaps. But it's at least one price you're going to have to pay to see high-quality programming on the Web.

ACT THREE

Here come the megachannels

Have you ever toured a movie-studio back lot that looks exactly like a real city except for the lack of people? That's what the headquarters of Net animation channel Icebox felt like this January. A year ago, it was hiring so many animators that company officials needed a giant warehouse halfway between the heart of Hollywood and LAX to house the company. Walking around there this year, you could see the proverbial tumbleweeds rolling—row upon row of empty work spaces, the result of cutting back the staff to 25 from 103 between November and January. "We're thinking about setting up a homeless shelter here," said chief executive Steven Stanford, strolling around the emptiness.

Just one month later, Icebox had melted down completely, yet another Digital Hollywood pioneer with too many arrows in its hide. Darwinism has invaded the world of original broadband entertainment. Most of the current players will fold or get gobbled up; the strongest of the strong will survive, and maybe even thrive as part of the next phase of original Web streaming content: the megachannel. "At the end of the day, there will be three to four significant players," says Stanford, "each with an infinite amount of choice." Outside observers concur, predicting that the Internet will mimic fee-free television, which has dozens of choices but retains four dominant networks. The difference, of course, is that these television networks mint money and thus assure their existence—the root challenge for the megachannel. "They're still going to have to prove their business plan can work," says Amir Malin, CEO of Artisan Entertainment, which created perhaps the Net's biggest marketing coup to date, *The Blair Witch Project.*

History will be their guide. Sites like DEN and Pseudo died for two reasons: First, they were too ambitious too early—not enough people had the bandwidth to watch their offerings. Second, they were too diffuse—even those surfers with high-speed connections had too many places to find such content. Accordingly, not enough people came to any of them. No audience means no advertising. No ads means no money. No money means *sayonara.*

The first step toward a real megachannel came in January, when **SHOCKWAVE.COM** and **ATOMFILMS** joined forces, creating an online network that draws about 9 million unique users a month, already larger than most cable channels. And the dealmaking is just beginning. "My task is to make sure we get bigger very fast," says Mika Salmi, the founder of AtomFilms and now the CEO of the merged company. He says that he gets callers almost every day inquiring whether he'd like to buy a smaller channel or sell his network to a larger company. By the end of the year, this Pac-Man–like process will provide users with a group of clear leaders for programming. **MEDIATRIP.COM**, **IFILM**, **HYPNOTIC**, and **YAHOO! VIDEO** should prove major players. And don't be surprised to see another giant, like RealNetworks or AOL Time Warner, buy itself a seat at the table.

Unlike the major television networks, these megachannels won't need to offer only one program at a time. They'll be able to showcase a broader array of programming and become entire systems of their own, with an array of subchannels, in much the same way that Yahoo! and AOL currently offer a deep experience reading and chatting in dozens of subject areas.

But breadth will go only so far—the key to driving traffic is hits. Not the page-view kind, but the kind of addictive programming that hooks you in every day or week for a fix. The Fox network needed *The Simpsons* and NFL football to establish itself as a sustainable venture; the Internet networks will need similar must-see products.

> AtomFilms–Shockwave has already signed up the likes of David Lynch, Tim Burton, Trey Parker, and James L. Brooks, all people with track records and a following

The surest way to guarantee a hit is to stockpile storytellers and stars. For the former, AtomFilms–Shockwave has already signed up the likes of David Lynch, Tim Burton, Trey Parker, and James L. Brooks, all people with track records and a following. Getting the stars has proved trickier, but as broadband access proliferates, they'll come around. "I'd first have to understand the [union] politics, but yes, yes, why not?" says Jeff Goldblum, the star of several Hollywood blockbusters, looking decidedly un-Sundance as he sits in a black leather jacket amid the snow-capped peaks surrounding Park City's Yarrow Hotel.

While the long-term future of the Internet belongs to live action, in the near term most of the breakout shows and stars will probably be animated, both because of the slowly evolving interest from big-name actors and the advantage animation has streaming over a 56K modem. "The Web will be a breeding ground for characters," says Mondo Media's Evershed, "which will lead to spinoffs in TV and film."

With all this talk of hits and stars, ads and spinoffs, don't be surprised if the online networks evolve in the direction of their traditional television counterparts. Ifilm will shortly begin an *Entertainment Tonight*–type show on the Independent Film Channel. Adds AtomFilm's Salmi, "Long term, strike or no strike, we're going to be in the TV business." That said, sometimes even the old-media route isn't enough: Before tanking in February, 128 >>

FOR SITES IN THIS STORY, PLEASE TURN TO THIS MONTH'S **SITE ADDRESS GUIDE**, OR VISIT **WWW.YIL.COM/URL/0104/PICTURE**

très Jolie

BY DAVID THOMAS

With Angelina as Lara Croft, the Net has already given *Tomb Raider* a thumbs-up. But the early buzz has Hollywood scared of premature burial

Hey, you! Please remove your eyes from the pictures at right and put them back in their intended position. Of course, when you've got the hottest living actress, Angelina Jolie, portraying the hottest virtual action hero, Lara Croft, that's easier said than done. Since last spring, when *Tomb Raider*'s casting coup was announced, the world's biggest movie-scoop sites—from fanboy-driven **AIN'T IT COOL NEWS [aintitcool.com]** to biz-oriented **DARK HORIZONS [darkhorizons.com]**—have buzzed with script speculation and casting wish-lists. In the past six months, Dark Horizons' *Tomb Raider* page got more hits than any other film, even *The Lord of the Rings*. This is the kind of fevered anticipation a movie studio should die for.

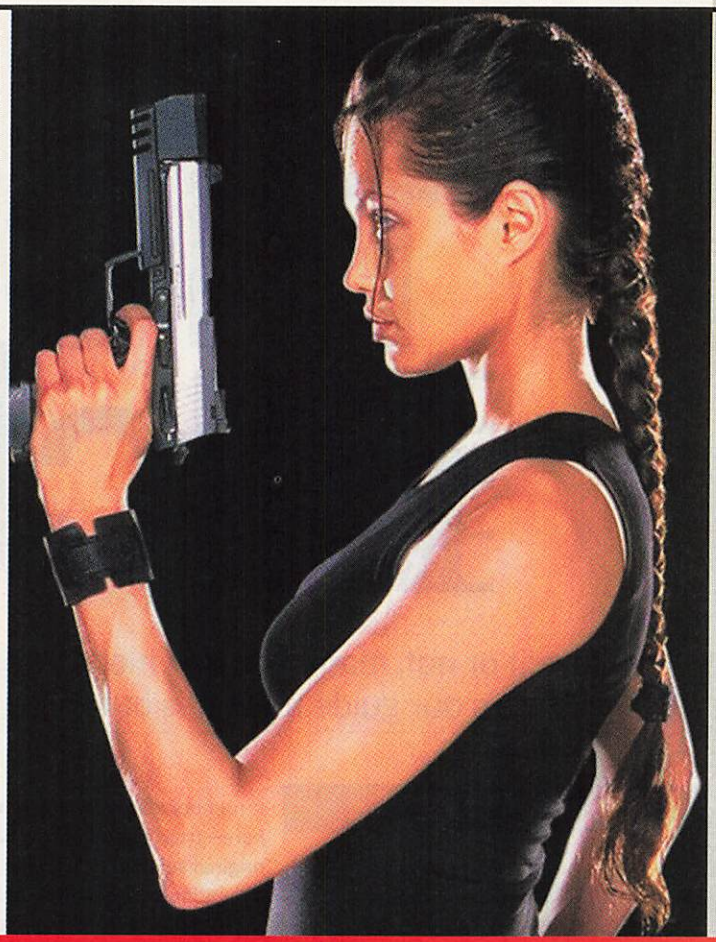
So why is Hollywood scared to death of too much word of mouth, even if it's a virtual droolfest? Paramount, distributor of *Tomb Raider*, did everything but threaten a mummy's curse to prevent *Y-Life* from putting Jolie on our cover two months before the movie's release. Studio reps rattled on about "overexposure," but to any Net-head with one-click access to *Tomb Raider* spy reports, the concept of overexposure seems so...20th century.

Judging from the *Tomb* Talkbacks on Ain't It Cool News, which grow more positive as the release date nears, Paramount has little to fear. That was important to producer Lloyd Levin. "I think the Ain't It Cool audience is part of the core audience for the film," he says, "and we're very concerned if something pops up there that is critical of what we're doing."

Garth Franklin, founder of Dark Horizons, says the studios fail to understand the motivations of Web-surfing cinephiles. "There's so much product coming out nowadays, the Net helps people be more choosy," he says. "If they're devoting a lot of time to a particular movie, they've already made the decision to see it." Jolie also seems to know which way is up: "There's an image about Lara, something she represents that people like and we hope to capture," she's said. "Lots of people love this game. We didn't want to dismiss that."

Bottom line: *Raider* makes an excellent test of Hollywood's assumptions. So, Paramount, let's make a deal: If *Tomb* tanks come June 15, we'll back off the early coverage. But if it blows away the box office, you'll gladly get with it. Just remember: Once something gets out on the Net, there ain't no taking it back.

JOLIE: ANTOINE VERGLAS/CORBIS OUTLINE; JOLIE AS LARA CROFT (WITH GUN): ALPHA/GLOBE PHOTOS, INC



2001 HOLLYWIRED

flicks to click

Believe it or not, many film download sites survived the dot-com shakeout. Here's our guide to what's out there BY CHRISTOPHER NULL

Shockwave.com

FOCUS: Shorts, animation, music, games
FORMAT: Win Media Player, Real, Flash
CONNECTION SPEED: 28.8Kbps and up

The new Shockwave.com is the spawn of a merger between AtomFilms and the old Shockwave, two of the most popular sites for shorts on the Web. The new company continues to crank out shorts as well as animations, such as Shockwave's revival of *The Critic.* Altogether, the conjoined site is one of the most consistently high-quality entertainment hubs on the Net. From low-brow humor (the *Bikini Bandits* and *Angry Kid* series) to excerpts from such shorts as *My Mother Dreams the Satan's Disciples in New York,* which won an Academy Award last year, many of the thousands of titles here will make you want to watch.

Ifilm ifilm.com

FOCUS: Shorts
FORMAT: Win Media Player, QT, Real
CONNECTION SPEED: 56Kbps and up

Only slightly less popular than Shockwave.com, according to *PC Data,* Ifilm is more of a film destination than a site for shorts. The focus here is on gossip, news, filmmaking how-tos, and feature stories, with original programming playing second fiddle. While the text content is top-notch, a number of great shorts can be found here—from digital cause célèbre *405* to original selections from the *Spike & Mike* animation series, to the online resurrection of Mr. Bill. Sure, the pop-up ads are a real nuisance, but Ifilm is better than ever.

MediaTrip.com

FOCUS: Animation, shorts, music videos
FORMAT: Flash, Win Media Player, Real
CONNECTION SPEED: 56Kbps and up

Home of cult fave *George Lucas in Love,* MediaTrip made headlines again with the announcement that its popular Flash-animated series *Lil' Pimp* is headed to the big screen. Meanwhile, you can check out the antics of the country's youngest playa through the regularly updated online episodes. MediaTrip is also the host of countless feature stories, interviews, message boards, and so much other content you couldn't possibly sift through it all in a week.

Z.com

FOCUS: Animation, music, TV
FORMAT: Flash, Real, Win Media Player
CONNECTION SPEED: 56Kbps and up

Z.com is a raunchy, in-your-face experience designed to get hip young kids in on the act. There's such music-based entertainment as Red Hot Chili Peppers and Alanis Morissette concert footage, and Z.com has drawn attention for its *Dare for Dollars* Webisodes, which feature sob-storytellers taking on disgusting and/or embarrassing challenges for cash payments. From "Bobbing for Maggots" to "Whipped Cream Bull Riding Challenge," the episode titles are self-explanatory, not to mention grotesquely hilarious.

Hypnotic hypnotic.com

FOCUS: Shorts, animation
FORMAT: QT, Real, Flash, Win Media Player
CONNECTION SPEED: 56Kbps and up

In partnership with Universal Pictures, Hypnotic aims to be a kind of online/offline film factory, and has grandiose plans to distribute its programming through all types of media. If the site overcomes its bugginess, this might become a good idea. Still, it's a reliable source for high-quality independent films, such as those shown during its Million Dollar Film Festival, along with high-profile projects like *Doppelganger,* starring Rebecca Gayheart and Timothy Olyphant.

ALWAYSi.com

FOCUS: Shorts, trailers, TV, features
FORMAT: Win Media Player
CONNECTION SPEED: 56Kbps and up

It's a little odd that some of the most popular programming at ALWAYSi (which

bills itself as "The Independent Entertainment Network") is made up of clips and trailers for studio feature films such as *Hannibal.* The remainder of the site is indeed indie-driven, with such spoofs as *American Beauty Pie* and *Pies Wide Shut* dominating the shorts that are available for consumption. To be sure, there are some gems to be found among the 1,000 or so attractions at the site, but its content partnership with Ifilm means you don't need to scour ALWAYSi for the good stuff.

D.Film dfilm.com

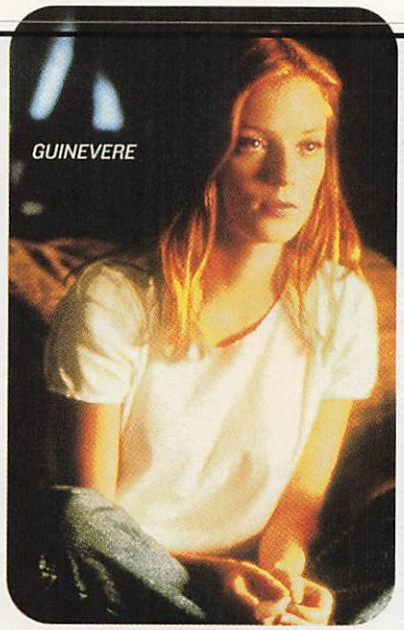
FOCUS: Shorts
FORMAT: QT
CONNECTION SPEED: 28.8Kbps and up

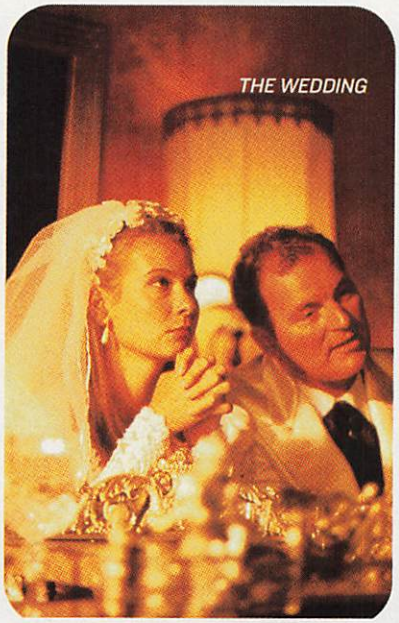
The D.Film Digital Film Festival presents a new entry as part of its year-round fest on a regular basis, each a high-quality short or other oddity, often from a well-known director (such as Doug Liman or Agnieszka Holland, whose short *The Wedding* is one of the site's most popular titles) or a rising star (such as comic-book artist Dave McKean). Its quality content is unavailable anywhere else and makes up for the paucity of material. It's also one of the few sites that lets you download entire films for local, jerk-free viewing at your convenience. What's more, D.Film mounts a real-life film festival that has played in cities from San Francisco to Cannes.

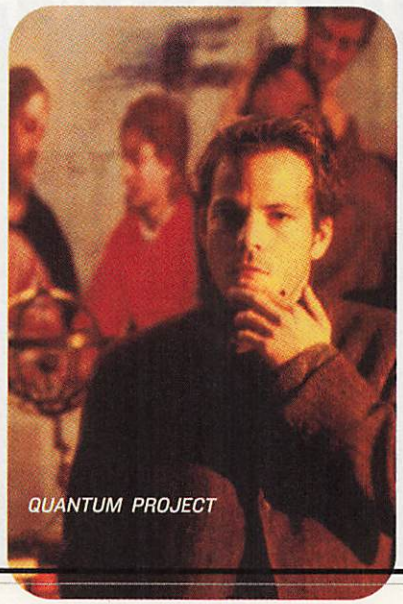
Filmfilm.com

FOCUS: Shorts, animation
FORMAT: Real
CONNECTION SPEED: 56Kbps and up

Never mind the crummy name, because FilmFilm is a great resource for indie filmmakers at any stage of their project. From casting your movie to finding a set builder, the guides available here make locating your crew a snap. In addition, the site will host your production's Web page, or simply let you pitch your project "to the world," ostensibly to find collaborators or the necessary financial support you need to get started. Of course, you can watch your own and others' final products until you're blue in the face, too. And judging from the overall quality (or lack thereof) of most of the shorts, that's not such a far-fetched notion.


GUINEVERE


THE WEDDING


QUANTUM PROJECT

Yahoo! Video broadcast.com/video

FOCUS: Features, shorts, TV, animation
FORMAT: Win Media Player, Real
CONNECTION SPEED: High bandwidth

What can't you find at Yahoo!'s emporium of digital entertainment? Not much, unless you happen to be looking for something that's new. Yahoo! Video's extensive film archive lets you stream full, big-time features, seemingly exclusively from the silent era—Charlie Chaplin is the site's No. 1 star by a long shot. Still, the site *has* dug up some modern content; for example, *The Doom Generation* is open for viewing. One warning: Good luck making sense of the site's organization.

Sightsound.com

FOCUS: Features, TV, music videos
FORMAT: Win Media Player (IE only), Flash
CONNECTION SPEED: High bandwidth

Home of 2000's ambitious *Quantum Project,* ostensibly the first feature film to be released exclusively for online sale (for $3.95), Sightsound is now known for releasing the Internet's first dud. Starring John Cleese and Stephen Dorff, the reviews of the 32-minute "feature" have been damning, leaving visitors idly clicking on Sightsound's other content, which leans strongly toward children's programming (one word: Barney) and music videos by obscure groups. It also created a splash recently by making the Miramax theatrical release *Guinevere* available for download.

ShortFest shortfest.com

FOCUS: Shorts
FORMAT: QT, Real
CONNECTION SPEED: High bandwidth

At "The Internet's First International Short Film Archive," you can browse through an infrequently updated collection of location-themed shorts from such faraway settings as Brazil and Japan. At ShortFest's companion site **ANYTHING THAT MOVES** [anythingthatmoves.net], 10 filmmakers are given a predetermined theme or score and asked to create a short work. Sounds promising, but the site is still in its infancy.

CHRISTOPHER NULL *is executive editor of* Smart Business *and founder of Filmcritic.com.*

GUINEVERE: WILL MCGARRY; THE WEDDING: SKYY VODKA; QUANTUM PROJECT: MICHELLE MATTEI

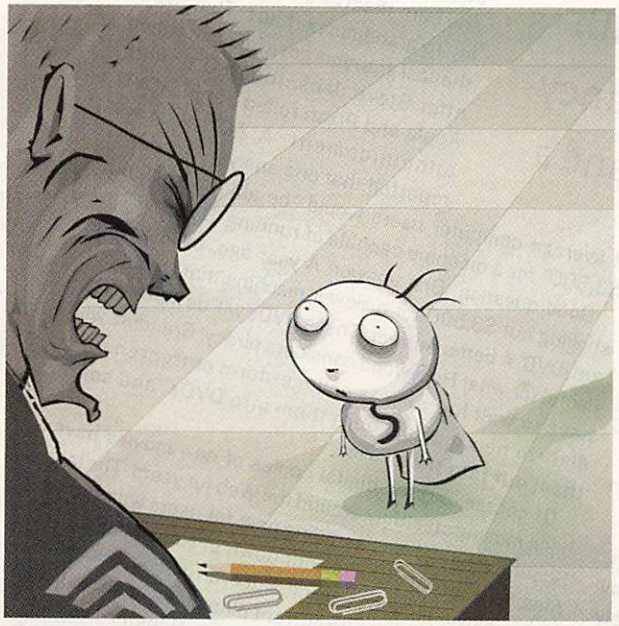
WILL THE TOONS INHERIT THE EARTH?

BY CHRISTOPHER NULL

While online entertainment quakes, animation is riding high

Seen the one about the microwaved gerbil? Or maybe you've gone *Behind the Music That Sucks*? Out of virtually nowhere, animation on the Web has become a pop culture phenomenon in an era that has seen online entertainment flounder helplessly. Once highfliers, the big-time film sites have faced a year of heartache, with **SHOCKWAVE.COM**'s December buyout of **ATOMFILMS** [atomfilms.com] symbolizing the end of one era and, possibly, the beginning of another. Today's animated fare isn't just kid stuff; it's very adult, often raunchy, and always hilarious. And it's attracting some of the biggest names in show business.

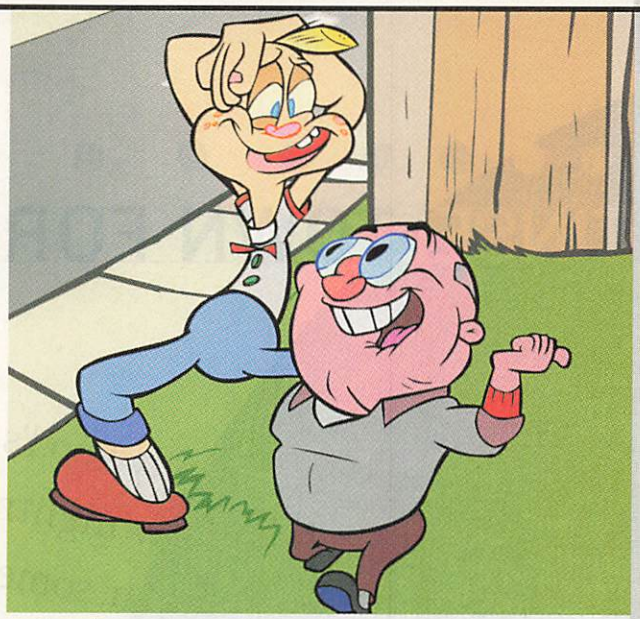
On Shockwave.com, Tim Burton (*Beetlejuice*, *Sleepy Hollow*) just wrapped his first six-episode season of *Stainboy*, an animated adventure series whose diminutive superhero has the power only to create stains. Rock-poster artist Frank Kozik has his own series at **WILDBRAIN.COM**, Kelsey Grammer's *Gary the Rat* is one of **MEDIATRIP.COM**'s top shows, and the latter site's *Lil' Pimp* is on its way to the big screen.



MERRIE MELODIES IT AIN'T: *Gary the Rat* (opposite), *Stainboy* (above), *Goddamn George Liquor Show* (top), and *Kozik* (below).

In the age of short-attention-span theater, animation rules. Shockwave.com, with 30 million registered users, regularly flirts with the Media Metrix 50 (which lists the most-trafficked Web sites), and it draws more visitors per week than sites for Disney or MTV. But that doesn't mean that animation hasn't had its pitfalls. In February, the once-mighty Icebox, home to animated shows from Jonathan Katz, John Kricfalusi (creator of *Ren & Stimpy*), and *Seinfeld*'s Larry David, announced it was shutting its doors.

So what's the secret to a successful animation site? Not much, according to Simon Assaad, co-CEO of Heavy, the producer of *Behind the Music That Sucks*. It's "the same reason some TV shows work and some don't: whether they're compelling or not," he says. Animation draws more viewers because it's more creative and takes more risks, Assad adds, thus building a devoted, regular audience. "I don't think anyone's been successful at doing a live-action narrative show online," he says.



Michael Yanover, senior vice president of entertainment for Shockwave, says file size is another major issue; because of this, people with slow connections (who make up the bulk of the Net) can share high-quality animations. "If it's a great experience and only two people can see it, it doesn't help you," he says.

Robert Hertzberg, an analyst at Jupiter Research, sees the boom in animation's popularity as more of a cost issue, pointing out that it's a lot easier to draw something than to get a real actor to do it on cue.

"Film is inherently much more complex," Hertzberg says. "It's expensive. It's resource-intensive to create short-form movies, even where the actors don't get paid much. It's a lot less complex to create animation—you can have one person alone creating it. And if you have a successful strip, you can develop a following." A microwaved gerbil doesn't hurt, either.

GARY THE RAT: © MEDIATRIP.COM; TIM BURTON'S STAINBOY: SHOCKWAVE.COM; LIQUOR SHOW: © JOHN KRICFALUSI; KOZIK: © WILDBRAIN.COM

BY ROGER EBERT

TINSELTOWN FOR THE TAKING

ITEM: *The Industry Standard* reports, "While no one will say it out loud, privately [movie executives] admit they're terrified Hollywood will be Napsterized: that some college kid will post a movie-swapping program that will explode in popularity, swiftly creating a ravenous audience of millions of users who will expect free access to Hollywood blockbusters."

ITEM: In January 2001, Apple introduces a new G4 desktop computer that includes iDVD software and DVD-R/CD-RW drives that enable users to digitize movies and burn them into DVDs. Compaq has a similar desktop on the way. The $3,500 computer incorporates a Pioneer drive that itself was priced at $5,000 weeks earlier.

ITEM: Two weeks after the Apple announcement, writer-director Richard Linklater premieres *Waking Life* at the Sundance Film Festival. His animated feature was produced by Austin, Texas, computer-animation wizards Tommy Pallotta and Bob Sabiston. They made it on their Macs, using Sabiston's Rotoshop software to digitize live-action video and serve it up for animators to play with.

ITEM: A *Wired* magazine article on Pallotta, Sabiston, and their Flat Black Films reports that Sabiston may package Rotoshop software, "since it runs on relatively cheap G4s." By comparison, *Wired* says, Pixar, the *Toy Story* shop, "this year bought 250 Silicon Graphics workstations, which typically run up to $30,000 a pop."

Both of these technologies—iDVD and Rotoshop—will spread quickly. Rotoshop holds the promise of extending the digital indie revolution from live action to animation. And iDVD is a way to quickly copy and distribute films that can play on any DVD machine. When this all comes to pass, the movie industry's fear of Napsterization will reach the loathing stage. When the *Standard* article appeared in January, the threat seemed to come from online file-swapping programs, but the new iDVD hardware and software are more ominous developments that threaten Hollywood's domination of both production and distribution.

Apple has a demo of iDVD on the Web, showing how easy it will be to take QuickTime movies of an innocuous day at the beach, for instance, and burn them into a DVD—for sending to grandma, perhaps. That hypothetical grandma got a lot of attention after Steve Jobs, the CEO of both Apple and Pixar, rolled out his iDVD announcement. A ZDNet story reported that one analyst wondered if average computer users would "be able to shell out $3,500" for a machine capable of running iDVD.

Good question. One answer: A year ago, people were shelling out $3,500 for a slower machine that would not run iDVD. A better answer: Those DVDs will be much more useful for what Hollywood considers piracy. Grandma will have to wait her turn as college-dorm entrepreneurs digitize new movies, burn them into DVDs, and send them out into the world.

Of course, pirated digital copies of new movies have been moving stealthily around the Web for years. The late Scour Exchange was a trading post for users with movie files, legal or not; it was shut down in November 2000 after a movie-industry lawsuit. But even if Scour succeeds in its current plans for a legal rebirth, it will not become a Napster-like Hollywood nightmare. Recent Hollywood movies circulating on the Web will invariably be illegal, and unlikely to be found on a convenient Web site.

More likely: a clandestine movable feast in cyberspace that changes its location daily or weekly, with the URL circulating underground. Since the enormous size of feature-film files makes them impractical for anyone without a T-1 line and a lot of storage, wide-scale piracy is impractical—or was, until iDVD. It's one thing to watch

Hollywood's new nightmare: Soon, some talented kid with a vision, a fancy new Mac, and a cheap animation program will figure out that filmmaking has become irresistibly affordable

PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGH KRETSCHMER

STYLIST: JENNIFER KATZ; HAIR: SAM LEONARDI; MAKEUP: LIA VAN DE DONK

a movie on a $3,500 (or $1,000) machine. It's another to slip a disc into a $199 DVD player. Burning a DVD is obviously an easier way for pirates to distribute their booty; if Hollywood is Napsterized, it may be by burners rather than looters.

At the same time Hollywood's war against piracy heats up, it will be facing another battle with the emerging indie animation breakthroughs. I was present at the Sundance world premiere of *Waking Life*, saw the standing ovation, and heard the buzz afterward from would-be filmmakers who talked about obtaining Rotoshop or its kin and making their own animated features. Sabiston told me he hesitated to sell Rotoshop but decided he might as well, since similar programs will no doubt appear.

Why is indie animation such a breakthrough? Because it's easier to make a low-budget animated film look professional than to do the same thing with live-action digital video. Your roommate running down the street looks depressingly like your roommate running down the street. Rotoshop him, stylize him, exaggerate his movements and speed, costume him, and suddenly he looks like a superhero.

What Rotoshop does is not new but old: It "rotoscopes" existing live action so it can be stylized as animation. From early Walt Disney to the summer 2001 release *Final Fantasy*, that approach has made animated movement look more lifelike—because it is.

The Blair Witch Project showed beyond argument that a $35,000 movie shot on digital video can gross upwards of $140 million. It probably also demonstrated that such a miracle could happen only once. For the most part, mainstream megaplex moviegoers expect a film to look as if some money was spent on it. Thanks to Sabiston and Pallotta, transmuting low-budget footage by animation to make it look measurably slicker has now become practical. Combine digital video, desktop computers, and Rotoshop, and you will sooner or later get a sensational movie from a junior Spielberg laboring in his archetypal garage.

Consider, too, that Garage Animation doesn't have to have the seamless final perfection of *The Lion King* or *Beauty and the Beast*. Audiences have been conditioned to accept low-tech animation, all the way down to the calculated simplicity of *South Park*. Rotoshop animation is several big steps up from *South Park* in the general direction of *Toy Story;* that it was made by hand (well, by Macintosh home computers, Final Cut Pro, and Rotoshop) doesn't keep it from looking sensational.

The news about iDVD and Rotoshop in early 2001 suggests that maybe we were all betting on the wrong pony when we assumed movies would be distributed on the Web. Video on demand is still waiting for more bandwidth. There's a utopian vision in which filmmakers showcase and distribute their wares on the Web; few people want to watch a 90-minute movie on a computer monitor. Even though Miramax posted one of its features on the Web in January (downloadable for a fee), and even though Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of America announced that other studios would also start streaming features, this will not be big business for a while.

But how about this emerging model: The Garage Filmmaker posts a trailer, a free scene, or even the first 15 minutes of a new film on the Web. If you like it, you buy the DVD. He has no overhead apart from his desktop machine, because he burns the DVDs only as needed.

So now what Hollywood faces is a simultaneous attack on its two semi-monopolies, production and distribution. Of the two, distribution is more threatened. We may see a new age in which Garage Filmmakers make masterpieces for preview and sale on the Web. But your typical Garagist, like the independent filmmakers who gather at Sundance every year, have no desire to continue working on minuscule budgets and grilled-cheese sandwiches. For every dedicated aesthete who cherishes his hermetic lifestyle, there are a thousand who want to be rich and famous. The game plan is, you make the movie for $25,000, it becomes a hit, and you sign with Disney and work with Cameron Diaz.

But, distribution, now....What would it really mean if iDVDs of new Hollywood movies were whizzing around the campus, and the country? And if anybody with a capable computer could make additional perfect digital copies of them? There would be a minimal impact on first-run box office, because 1) most movies make most of their money in the first month, and 2) the people who buy tickets want to see that particular movie in a theater. But pirated iDVDs could cut into the aftermarkets of satellite, cable, network, and video. We're talking millions here.

> Burning a DVD is an easier way for pirates to distribute booty; if Hollywood is Napsterized, it may be by burners rather than looters

What countermeasures can Hollywood take? There is always the law. Piracy, after all, is theft. But Web distribution is a hydra-headed monster. Unauthorized copies of original work have a slippery way about them and find themselves in strange mailboxes almost by accident. Whizzing around the Net, iDVDs would be less traceable than e-mail attachments.

Hollywood will defend itself in three ways: 1) by vigorous copyright enforcement and prosecution of pirates; 2) by emphasizing the extra bells and whistles and classy covers and booklets of legitimate DVDs; and 3) by offering some new features for Web downloading, either during or after first run.

Will Hollywood survive its techhead competitors? Of course. For one thing, moviegoers like to see stars, and Hollywood can pay them. For another, audiences like live actors better than animated ones. First-run theatrical exhibition will be more or less unaffected. And most consumers will always find it easier to buy movies at Virgin, Tower, Blockbuster, or Amazon than go to the trouble and risk of obtaining them illegally. Maybe pirate iDVDs will only prime the market for legitimate merchandise, as MP3 downloads have boosted retail music sales.

But one thing's for sure: Just as the big record companies lost their monopoly to countless smaller companies in the 1950s; just as hip-hop and rap were end runs around expensively produced music; just as the networks lost their monopoly to cable and access channels, so will the new technology create a parallel market of filmmaking and distribution. This could be fun.

ROGER EBERT, *the film critic, writes* Y-Life's *"Critical Eye" column.*

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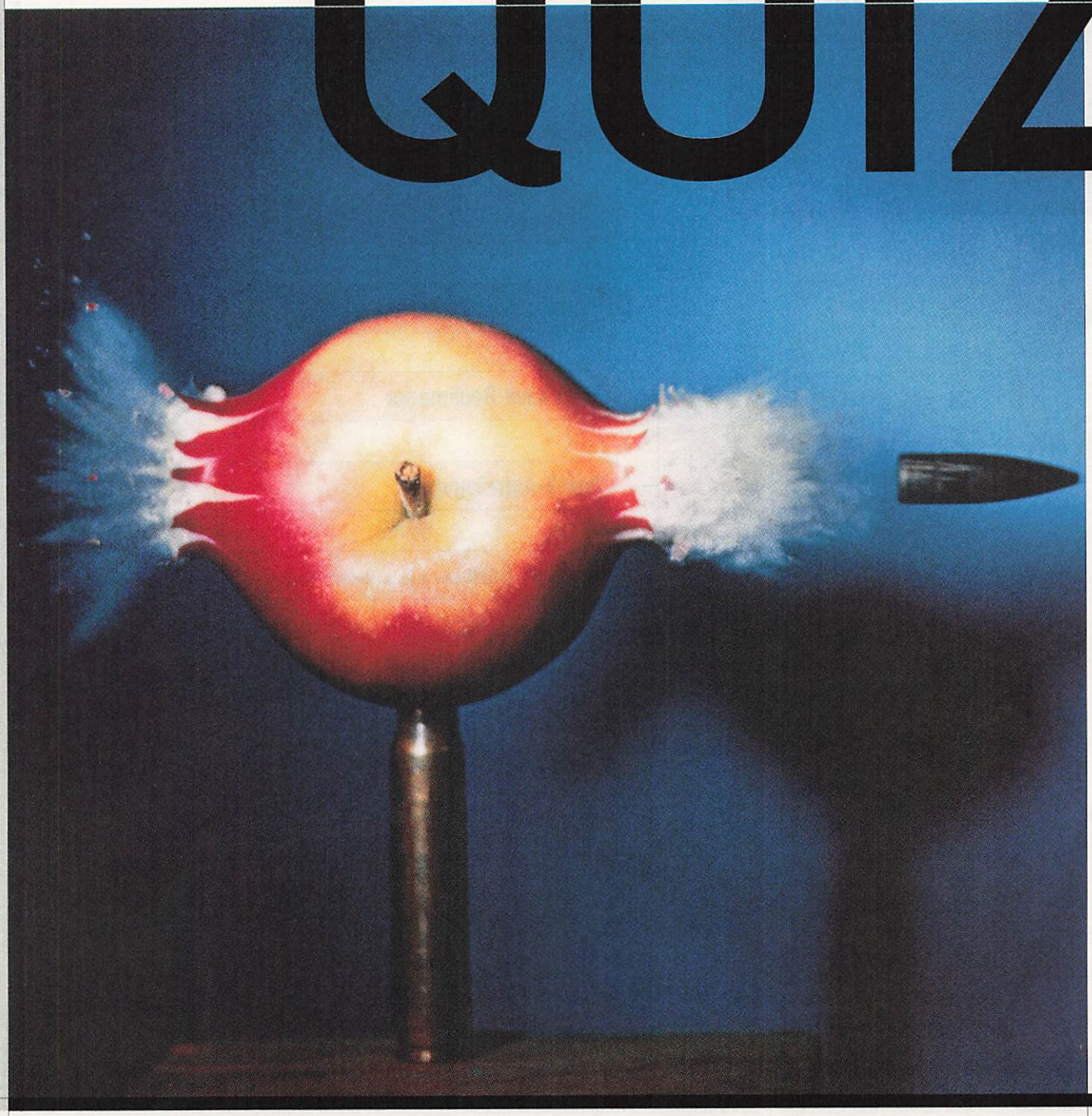

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BY LOU DOLINAR

Do you want a fast Internet connection at home? Of course! So, which kind will you choose? Cable? DSL? Satellite? Uh-huh—suddenly the cat's got your tongue. Each of these broadband options can clock speeds up to 20 times faster than a typical 56Kbps modem, but each has restrictions, advantages, and disadvantages. Choosing wisely can be tough.

Our broadband quiz, on the other hand, could help even Helen Gurley Brown figure out what kind of fast-access person she is. By the time you're done, you'll have a much better idea of how to get the best broadband connection for your home—and your wallet. Shall we begin?

Eight questions.
Three choices.
One answer.
No waiting.

1 WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

a. In the big city. b. Out in the suburbs. c. Way, way out in the boonies.

Location, location, location: The type of broadband service you can get has a lot to do with where you live.

If you answered **a**, you have a lavish choice of DSL providers, including the local phone company, local ISPs, and big national carriers like AOL, AT&T, and MSN. Most are ready to sell you any of several grades of service, some of which are so fast and expensive that they're aimed mainly at businesses. Cable modem service is also available, and you may even be able to get a nifty new wireless system like **SPRINT BROADBAND DIRECT** [sprintbroadband.com] or **RICOCHET** [www.ricochet.com].

If you answered **b**, on the other hand, you're definitely in cable country. Ask your cable company whether it has any discount packages that combine 100 or 200 channels of digital television along with cable modem service.

If you answered **c**, look to the heavens. If you're beyond cable's reach, you can consider a satellite service: tried-and-true **DIRECPC** [www.direcpc.com] or relative newcomer **STARBAND** [starband.com]. Both now offer two-way service; you can download data from the satellite and upload directly back to it. You no longer need to use a slow modem for upstream communications.

2 PARDON US FOR ASKING, BUT ARE YOU RICH?

a. As it is, I can barely afford AOL. b. Price matters, but I'm flexible. c. I'll pay whatever it costs.

If you answered **a**, relax. Broadband isn't going to cost all that much more than you're spending right now, because you can get rid of your existing ISP and that second phone line you needed when you were dialing up. That'll save you at least $30 a month. Broadband can start as low as $30 per month if you get one of those cable modem couch-potato specials. But in general, figure on roughly $40 to $60 a month for DSL or about $60 per month (plus a potentially pricey installation) for satellite service. Even if you do stick with AOL, you'll get a $10-a-month discount for using your own Web access.

If you answered **b** or **c**, look for options that will boost speed. That means investigating higher grades of DSL service if they're available in your area.

3 ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT YOUR CABLE TV SERVICE?

a. It's reliable, and they just gave me a new digital set-top box. b. Customer service sucks, and the TV goes out during storms. c. I don't have cable.

Keep in mind that your cable modem service isn't going to be any better than your cable TV service.

If you answered **a**, you're in good shape.

Getting a cable modem is a no-brainer for you—it's cheaper, faster, and less hassle to install than DSL.

If you answered **b**, you're living in an area saddled with antiquated equipment and aging wires. Oddly, since most big cable systems are conglomerations of little cable systems, you'll sometimes find terrible service on one side of the street and good service on the other, so you can't always count on what people say about the system as a whole. But if all you hear are cable nightmares, that makes you an obvious candidate for DSL service, assuming that option is available to you.

If you answered **c** and can get cable, consider it. Figure on $30 to $50 per month for Web access, but really, why not hook up your TV, too? *The Sopranos* is a great show, and *Sex and the City* has its moments.

4 TELL US WHAT YOU LIKE TO DOWNLOAD.

a. I love music and video files, and I download a lot of them. b. I play around with shareware occasionally. c. It's just typical Web pages for me.

No matter what you answered, you want maximum download speeds for the bucks. That means that all else being equal, you want a cable modem, which will typically stream data down to you at a speed of 1 to 3 megabits per second. Satellite and the least expensive grades of DSL, on the other hand, run at roughly one-quarter of that speed. Real-world performance varies greatly among providers, so go online to check out personal reports (and horror stories) at sites such as **DSLREPORTS** [dslreports.com].

If you answered **b** or **c**, you won't notice much difference between a cable and a DSL connection, because brief downloads rarely hit the rated speed of the connection. When does the speed of cable really shine? When you're downloading three songs from Napster all at once.

5 WANT TO RUN A WEB BUSINESS FROM HOME?

a. Absolutely. b. Maybe someday, I'd like to experiment. c. Nope.

If you answered **a**, read the fine print on what providers allow, since consumer-grade services (particularly cable) tend to ban applications that use a lot of upstream bandwidth, and they snoop for people who use them. In other words, they don't want you running a Web-based business from your home. Instead, you'll have to pay more for business-grade SDSL (*S* is for *symmetric*, meaning the same speed in both directions) or a premium cable service like **@WORK** [work.home.net]. You may even have to pay a premium for a fixed IP address.

If you answered **b**, you can probably use cable or DSL. Just keep an eye on average upstream speeds when you're weighing your options. Cable systems generally can manage about 128Kbps upstream, versus 90 to 384 for consumer-grade DSL (though DSL's average speed today is also 128Kbps). Anything less than 100Kbps will be sluggish for others who try to access your PC.

If you answered **c**, you don't need to worry about upload speed. Get the cheapest service you can find.

WATCH YOUR SPEED

JUST HOW FAST IS YOUR CONNECTION, ANYWAY?

Are you getting what you're paying for? Several online tools test the speed of your connection and give you an instant report. Our recommendations:

PC MAGAZINE'S NETPERSEC
[zdnet.com/downloads/stories/info/0,,00IDUV,.html]

CNET: BANDWIDTH METER
[webservices.cnet.com/bandwidth]

Learn more about the quality of current broadband offerings at **PC MAGAZINE: BROADBAND SPECIAL REPORT**
[pcmag.com/broadband]

6 ARE YOU INTO MULTI-PLAYER GAMES?

a. Dude, hand me a rocket launcher. b. My kids fool around with them. c. (Yawn) I'm not interested.

If you answered **a**, you need to worry more about something called latency (the gap between the moment you pull the trigger and the moment the online gun fires) than you do about how many bits the connection moves every second. Imagine how frustrating it must be to assume the role of an intergalactic assassin only to discover that your target is off the screen by the time your death ray actually fires. Connections with low latency (which is measured in milliseconds) offer faster response times, and that can mean the difference between winning and losing in some games. Although there are exceptions, consumer DSL is more suitable for hard-core gamers than cable. Commercial DSL is even better.

If you answered **b**, you'll be satisfied with cable. Just remember that as more people crowd into a cable modem neighborhood and share the system, both latency and speed will deteriorate. And whatever you do, avoid satellite if you or your kids are online gamers; it has the worst latency of all.

If you answered **c**, latency isn't an issue.

7 DON'T GET NERVOUS, BUT ...UM...ARE YOU PARANOID?

a. I don't want to talk about it, but yes. b. Naw, I've got nothing to hide.

If you answered **a**, cable may make you queasy—you share your cable connection with others in your area. In effect, you're joining a computer network. You may hear stories of people being able to print out their documents at the house down the block, but it's not that bad, and some providers use encryption software so that downstream info goes only to you. And if you install an inexpensive (or free) personal firewall utility such as **ZONEALARM** [zonelabs.com], you'll be safe. (You can look at the utility's incident log to see just how often your connection is probed by outsiders.) DSL, on the other hand, establishes a private connection between you and the phone company, just as your regular phone line does. It's inherently more secure.

If you answered **b**, don't worry about the shared nature of cable access.

8 CARE TO SHARE YOUR FAST CONNECTION?

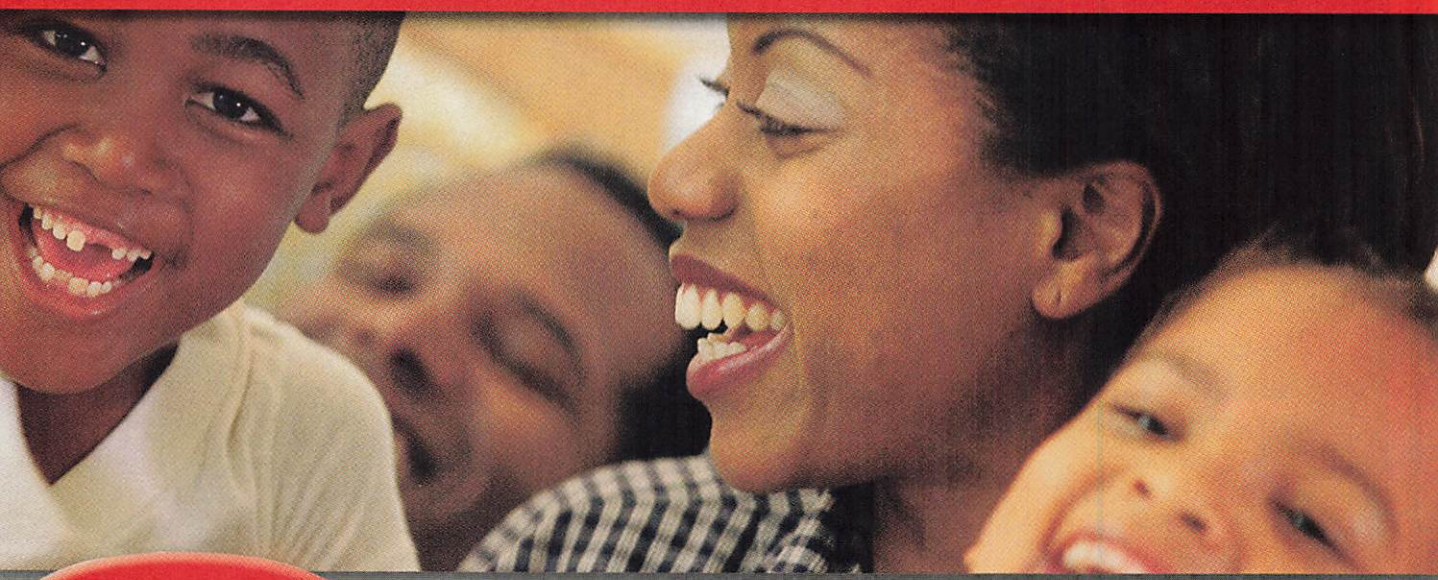
a. Sure, I'll be the family hero. b. No, it's just me and my PC.

If you answered **a**, check providers carefully. Most let you connect multiple computers in a home network but won't help you if anything goes wrong with the connections. The alternative: A handful of premium DSL providers include hardware that lets you connect more than one computer, and most cable modem providers will sell you an additional connection, and maintain it, for about $20 per month. For do-it-yourself sharing, cable tends to be a tad easier to set up than DSL. Watch out for DSL providers who use PPPoE (Point to Point Protocol over Ethernet), which some networking hardware can't handle.

If you answered **b**, there's nothing to worry about. Just keep focusing on price and speed.

LOU DOLINAR *is a* Newsday *columnist whose how-to technology advice is archived at Lousday [dolinar.com].*

How Do You Click With Your Family?



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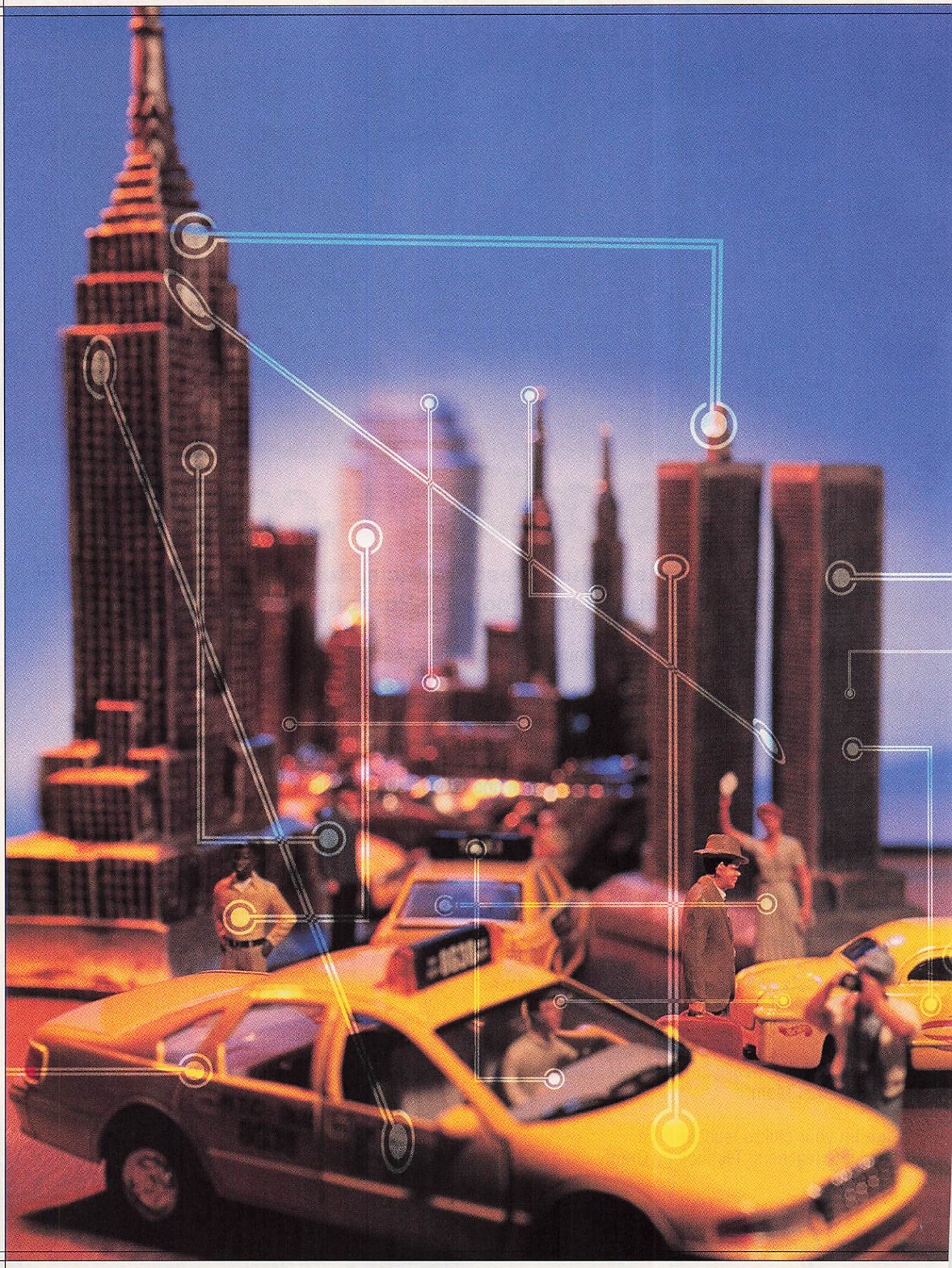
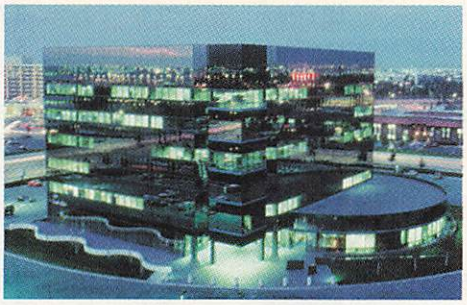


AMERICA'S 50 MOST WIRED CITIES ...AND TOWNS

What does it take to make it onto our annual list? A truly wired local government, a density of dot-coms, and a burning interest in broadband...for starters

CALIFORNIA, HERE WE COME! AN ASTONISHING FOUR of our top 10 and eight out of our top 25 wired cities this year are in the Golden State. In fact, if you live just about anywhere on the coast between San Diego and Santa Barbara, you're in one of the top 20 most wired cities (we're assuming, of course, that a steady supply of electricity is available). ■ San Jose squeaks past San Francisco for the top spot this year, while Washington, D.C., and Austin, Texas, hang on to their top-five positions, as well. How do we know? By calculating four measurements for each city or standard metropolitan area: how many of the city's residents use the Internet, how sophisticated they are, how many of the city's businesses are on the Internet, and how much content about the city and its government is available online. Why do we care? Because there are actually two digital divides. While the national debate has centered on individual haves and have-nots, the disparity among entire communities goes largely unnoticed.



Do you know the way to the most wired city? Here's a hint: Head south from San Francisco.

We factored in relative city sizes to generate scores that reflect *degree* of wiredness, rather than simple quantity.

A city could score a maximum of 10 points for each measurement, making 40 the highest possible score. The city with the highest measurement in each category received the highest score, and all other cities received scores in proportion.

This scoring allowed us to compare cities directly: A city with a final score of 40 would be twice as wired as a city with a score of 20.

NET USE For this score, Forrester Research, a Cambridge, Massachusetts–based market research firm, provided us with data showing the percentage of households online.

USER SOPHISTICATION Forrester Research also told us the proportion of online households that connect via broadband or are very interested in getting fast access. Then we factored in online-shopping expenditures over a three-month period. Each factor counted for five of this score's 10 points.

DOMAIN DENSITY We turned to Matthew Zook at the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California–Berkeley, for this score. Zook has done extensive analyses of the geographic distribution of Internet use and its relationship to local economies (see his **INTERNET GEOGRAPHY PROJECT** [zooknic.com]). One measurement he tracks is the number of domains registered per thousand businesses in a city.

AVAILABLE CONTENT First we counted the number of sites about the city, as listed in the **YAHOO! GET LOCAL** [local.yahoo.com] guide, and divided by the number of residents. Then we looked through local-government sites and rated them as a whole on a five-point scale. These scores counted for five points each.

To find out more about how we did the math, and to see complete results for 87 cities, go to www.yil.com/wiredcities.

GUY MICHAEL CURRIER *is a New York–based writer and market research analyst.*

by Guy Michael Currier

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID MCGLYNN; DIGITAL ENHANCEMENT: GENE BRESLER; BUILDING: VINCE STREANO/CORBIS OUTLINE

AMERICA'S 50 MOST WIRED

	LAST YEAR	CITY/ METRO AREA	POPULATION	NET USE	USER SOPHISTICATION	DOMAIN DENSITY	AVAILABLE CONTENT	TOTAL POINTS
1	3	San Jose, CA	1.5 million	9.7	9.3	10.0	4.3	33.3
2	1	San Francisco, CA	1.6 million	9.0	7.3	9.3	6.9	32.5
3	4	Austin-San Marcos, TX	782,000	10.0	7.3	5.0	6.8	29.1
4	2	Washington, DC*	3.9 million	9.3	6.9	5.5	6.4	28.1
5	11	Orange County, CA	2.4 million	8.5	6.9	5.5	5.7	26.6
6	29	Las Vegas, NV	741,000	6.5	6.8	4.7	8.0	26.0
7	—	Oxnard-Ventura, CA	669,000	8.2	7.9	5.2	4.4	25.7
8	14	Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	735,000	9.6	7.1	3.5	4.7	24.9
9	5	Seattle, WA	2.6 million	7.5	6.9	4.1	6.1	24.6
10	30	Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ	1.0 million	8.7	6.9	4.1	4.7	24.4
11	15	New York, NY	8.5 million	7.1	6.4	5.3	5.5	24.3
12	7	Boston, MA	4.2 million	7.8	7.0	4.0	5.4	24.2
13	6	San Diego, CA	2.5 million	7.7	6.1	5.2	5.1	24.1
14	22	Oakland, CA	2.1 million	7.9	6.6	5.9	3.1	23.5
15	21	Phoenix-Mesa, AZ	2.1 million	7.6	5.8	4.3	5.2	22.9
16	9	Atlanta, GA	2.8 million	8.4	6.5	3.6	4.4	22.9
17	8	Dallas, TX	2.6 million	8.4	7.1	3.7	3.3	22.5
18	13	Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA	8.9 million	7.2	6.0	5.9	3.2	22.3
19	10	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	2.5 million	7.2	5.5	3.4	6.2	22.3
20	39	Bergen-Passaic, NJ	1.3 million	7.6	6.4	3.2	4.6	21.8
21	17	Chicago, IL	6.1 million	7.2	6.7	3.4	4.3	21.6
22	28	Sacramento, CA	1.5 million	6.7	6.5	3.8	4.5	21.5
23	24	Salt Lake City-Ogden, UT	1.1 million	6.6	6.1	3.1	5.7	21.5
24	16	Portland, OR-Vancouver, WA	1.5 million	7.2	6.1	3.0	5.0	21.3
25	42	Fort Lauderdale, FL	1.3 million	7.5	6.3	3.8	3.5	21.1
26	12	Denver, CO	1.6 million	7.5	6.6	3.5	3.4	21.0
27	48	Monmouth-Ocean, NJ	986,000	7.5	6.4	2.8	3.9	20.6
28	—	Charlotte-Gastonia, NC-Rock Hill, SC	1.2 million	6.4	6.6	2.1	4.9	20.0
29	—	Newark, NJ	1.8 million	8.4	6.7	2.9	2.0	20.0
30	19	Orlando, FL	1.1 million	6.4	6.0	2.8	4.7	19.9
31	23	Houston, TX	3.7 million	7.3	6.0	2.8	3.7	19.8
32	45	West Palm Beach-Boca Raton, FL	864,000	6.9	5.6	3.9	3.4	19.8
33	—	Richmond-Petersburg, VA	866,000	8.3	6.0	2.1	3.0	19.4
34	31	Columbus, OH	1.4 million	7.5	5.5	2.4	3.9	19.3
35	18	Philadelphia, PA**	5.9 million	6.7	5.9	2.8	3.9	19.3
36	44	Rochester, NY	1.0 million	6.9	6.5	2.2	3.6	19.2
37	49	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	2.1 million	6.6	5.6	2.8	4.2	19.2
38	33	Tucson, AZ	667,000	6.4	5.6	2.8	4.4	19.2
39	35	Miami, FL	1.9 million	7.3	5.0	4.2	2.6	19.1
40	—	Wichita, KS	485,000	6.8	5.3	1.8	5.2	19.1
41	—	Jacksonville, FL	907,000	6.9	5.6	2.2	4.3	19.0
42	—	Nassau-Suffolk, NY	2.6 million	6.8	5.7	3.0	3.5	19.0
43	36	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	874,000	7.4	6.4	1.8	3.3	18.9
44	26	Nashville, TN	985,000	6.9	5.6	2.4	4.0	18.9
45	—	Oklahoma City, OK	959,000	6.8	6.3	1.8	4.0	18.9
46	20	Baltimore, MD	2.4 million	6.8	6.2	2.8	3.0	18.8
47	—	Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1.3 million	7.3	6.2	2.1	3.2	18.8
48	40	Norfolk-V. Beach-Newport News, VA	1.4 million	7.8	5.0	1.7	4.3	18.8
49	47	New Orleans, LA	1.2 million	6.6	5.2	1.7	5.1	18.6
50	43	Kansas City, MO-Kansas City, KS	1.6 million	7.6	5.3	2.5	3.1	18.5

Estimated population is based on Standard Metropolitan Area figures. NET USE = percentage of households online; USER SOPHISTICATION = broadband use or interest plus the average amount of online shopping over a three-month period; DOMAIN DENSITY = number of domains registered per thousand businesses; AVAILABLE CONTENT = number of sites about the city in Yahoo!'s Get Local guide plus the quantity and quality of local government site

CITIES

To see complete results for 87 cities, go to **WWW.YIL.COM/WIREDCITIES**

COMMENTS
A Net-economy powerhouse where the Web is not just used, but used well
Last year's top city slips in listings but is still the only one that is strong in every measure
A savvy college town and Dell's HQ, but less business use than some
The highest scorer of its size, with an affluent, info-hungry population
A one-two combo of affluence and high-tech industry
You can bet that as a top tourist destination, it won the content race by a mile
This industrial/tech region north of L.A. enjoys heavy home use
A hard-core academic research center with a Net-savvy population
Microsoft and Amazon.com's home shows slower growth than other cities
A service economy that knows e-business and has a big online population
Silicon Alley's home is simply too huge to earn a high Net-use percentage...for now
The original center of tech innovation is treading water. Finish that Big Dig
Another high-tech center that gives the Digital Coast its name
The Bay Area's "other" city benefits from nearby influences
Content ratings continue to improve in this otherwise average large city
A Net-leaning population keeps the Belle of the South in the top 20
Affluent residents online overcome otherwise lackluster ratings
Like NYC, it's so vast and diverse that it's hard to compete with smaller Net-savvy cities
Middle America's online leader—solidly in the center on all fronts
These New York suburbs benefit from the city's economic spillover
Still lagging with industries like packaged goods that have fewer Net needs
Education and government power the capital of the most important Net state
Education, government, and high-tech converge in the next Olympic city
Despite a tumble in rankings as other areas find their game, Net use is still strong
Business and home use is healthy as retirees give ground to younger new residents
The Mile High City continues to move toward the middle as other cities surge ahead
Tourism and suburban affluence keep this area in the running
This growing urban area is a Smoky Mountain high
Remarkably strong usage stats in this formerly shattered but now rebounding city
Another fast-growing area, entertainment-focused but not as wired as some
Strong in Net use for its size, but weak in e-business and Web content
Domain registration comes on strong as this Treasure Coast region gets younger
Like Salt Lake City and Sacramento, this small capital's wired thanks to gov't and education
Like Chicago, lagging without compelling reasons for Net use by business
The East Coast's contribution to overall averageness
The home of Xerox and Kodak is a historical innovator, but today it's way behind
Decent Internet use from this city's residents—when they're on the Net at all
Academic strength keeps this city wired
Lots of users and businesses online, but less savvy than most. Too much partying?
Plenty of content about Kansas's main industrial center
The largest U.S. city by area has a long way to go on the Net
Decent numbers for well-off New York suburbs with little industry
Another small capital city where the political-minded stay on top of what's new
Country entertainment hasn't gotten too wired just yet
One of the lowest scorers for business Net use
A large city barely hanging on to the top 50; no benefits here from being coastal
Dallas's sister city suffers by comparison but has strong Net use
Affluence keeps Net use high, but age keeps depth of use low
Tourism accounts for the large amount of available content
Residents may use the Net, but businesses and government need to catch up

he Washington, D.C., area includes parts of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. **The Philadelphia area includes Wilmington, DE; Atlantic City, ; and parts of Maryland. Apparent ties are the result of rounding.

KELLY-MOONEY/CORBIS

TOP TEN LISTS

Percentage of households using the Net

1	Austin-San Marcos,TX	69.7%
2	San Jose, CA	67.6%
3	Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	67.0%
4	Washington, DC*	64.9%
5	San Francisco, CA	62.5%
6	Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ	60.7%
7	Orange County, CA	59.1%
8	Newark, NJ	58.5%
9	Dallas, TX	58.4%
10	Atlanta, GA	58.2%

(Source: Forrester Research, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey*)

Broadband use and interest

1	Oxnard-Ventura, CA	62.7%
2	Bakersfield, CA	61.0%
3	Stockton-Lodi, CA	56.7%
4	Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	54.9%
5	San Jose, CA	54.5%
6	Las Vegas, NV	53.7%
7	Salt Lake City-Ogden, UT	52.7%
8	Oklahoma City, OK	52.3%
9	Fort Worth-Arlington,TX	52.2%
10	Sacramento, CA	51.7%

(Source: Forrester Research)

Online spending per Internet user

1	San Jose, CA	$297
2	San Francisco, CA	$211
3	Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ	$194
4	Austin-San Marcos,TX	$189
5	Newark, NJ	$185
6	Oakland, CA	$181
7	Boston, MA	$180
8	Washington, DC*	$180
9	Orange County, CA	$180
10	Dallas, TX	$179

(Source: Forrester Research)

Domains per 1,000 firms

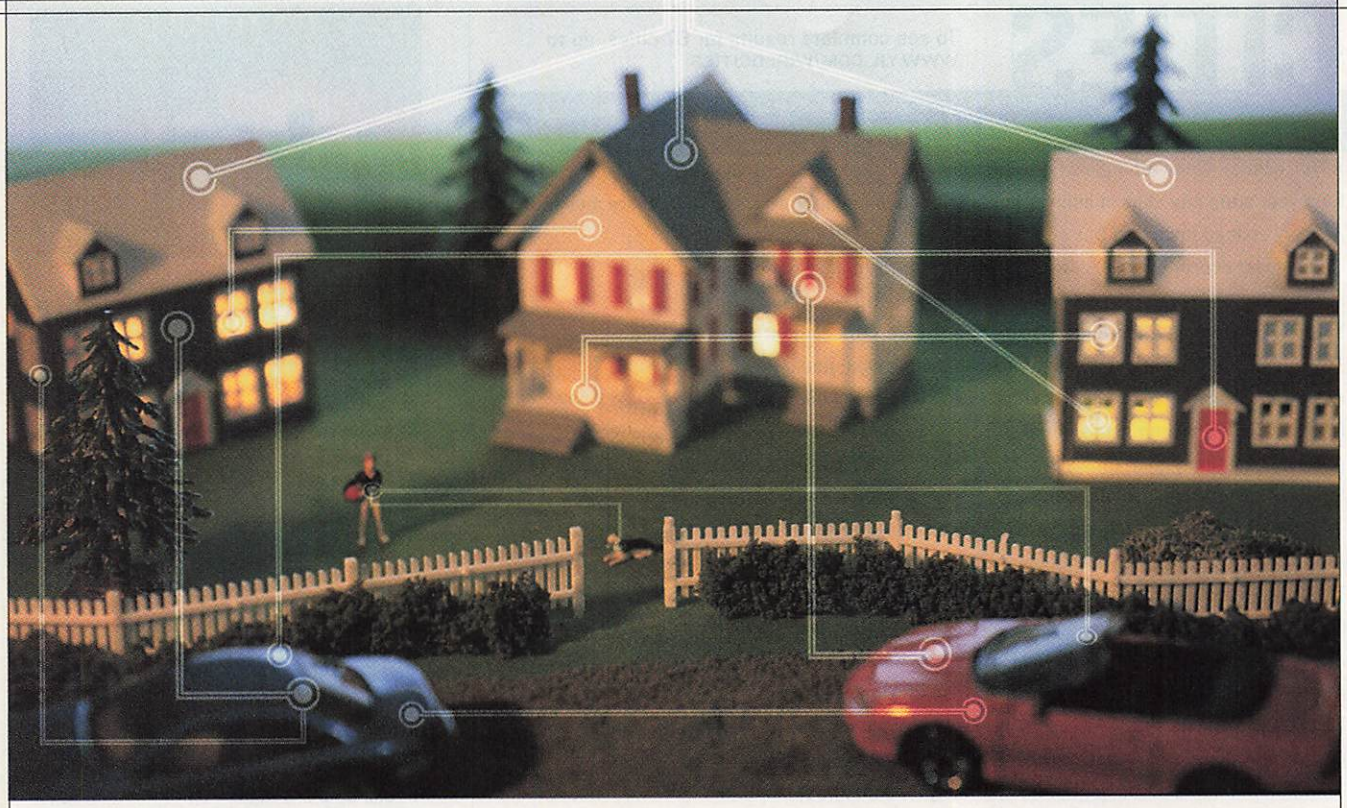
1	San Jose, CA	3,486.8
2	San Francisco, CA	3,239.8
3	Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA	2,074.5
4	Oakland, CA	2,044.1
5	Washington, DC*	1,934.0
6	Orange County, CA	1,922.8
7	New York, NY	1,845.5
8	Oxnard-Ventura, CA	1,826.9
9	San Diego, CA	1,809.4
10	Austin-San Marcos, TX	1,733.1

(Source: Matthew Zook)

Yahoo! listings per million residents

1	Las Vegas, NV	180.7
2	Harrisburg-Lebanon-Carlisle, PA	124.2
3	Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson, SC	109.2
4	Austin, TX	102.4
5	Orlando, FL	98.8
6	Salt Lake City-Ogden, UT	97.0
7	Boston, MA	85.6
8	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	84.6
9	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	78.7
10	Phoenix, AZ	78.7

(Source: Yahoo!)



THE MOST WIRED TOWNS

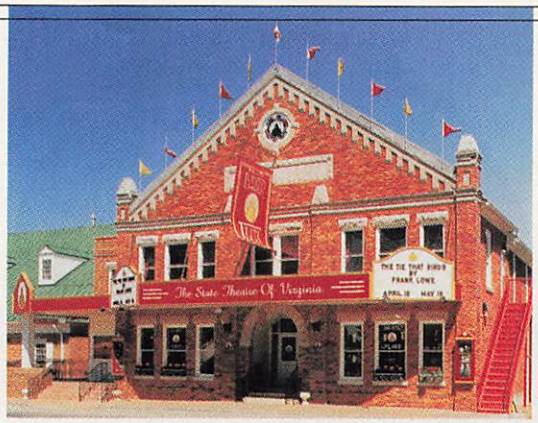
From the cornfields of Kentucky to the prairies of Montana, a portrait of small-town America at the dawn of the Internet Century

ABINGDON, VA POP. 11,500 URL www.eva.org Like a doctor making house calls, Mat Matt has hooked up 80 residents to Abingdon's 1.5 miles of fiber-optic cable. With a sophisticated high-speed network, Abingdon is the only Virginia city allowed to act as its own service provider. Thanks to the efforts of a local congressman four years ago, the town began providing broadband service months before a statewide ban on government-sponsored Net access took effect. "It was a huge fight with the communications industry," says Matt, the town's information services director. "They wanted to offer this, but not cheaply. Somehow we came through it." Matt has grandiose plans for doctors to send X-rays directly through the network to nearby hospitals, but that's a ways off. First, Matt says, the town has to teach its residents that the services actually exist. Then, resident by resident, at a rate of two or three new customers a week, he has to wire the town: "We expand very slowly." **HOW WOULD ABINGDON'S MOST FAMOUS RESIDENT HAVE USED THE NET?** "In 1778 there was a Reverend Charles Cummings, who was a real hellfire-and-brimstone preacher; he carried a flintlock musket," says town planning director Al Bradley. "I would imagine he'd have all his sermons on the Internet. He'd probably stream them so you could hear him."

ASHLAND, OR POP. 20,000 URL ashland.or.us At any given time at the Black Sheep pub, an English-style restaurant that serves both kidney pie and venison at heavy wooden tables, you'll see two or three people using laptops. They're mostly local writers and high-tech workers who've learned by word of mouth about the pub's high-speed wireless service. "I tell anybody I see with a laptop: 'Hey, I've got this!'" co-owner Andrew Chester says. "But I don't advertise it in the paper right now." That's the story of high-speed access

by Steve Knopper

in this southern Oregon university town: Though not everybody knows it, residents can take advantage of miles of fiber-optic cable and a city-run network—and new services for that network are already on the drawing board. Pete Lovrovich, Ashland's power and telecommunications director, says local business and technology leaders have been meeting to brainstorm such applications as videoconferencing, music sharing, and high-speed video games that the residents could access on its intranet. "As the community starts to learn and understand," he says, "they see how it can help their lives." **HOW WOULD ASHLAND'S MOST FAMOUS RESIDENT HAVE USED THE NET?** "Angus Bowmer founded the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 1935, and today the festival truly is the economic engine of our community. It's a Tony Award–winning theater and the largest repertory theater company in the United States," says Ann Seltzer, who handles city communications and marketing. "The very notion of starting a world-renowned theater company in southern Oregon in 1935 was preposterous, and Angus would have used the Net to research other theater companies around the world, as well as costumes from different centuries, and scripts."



The Barter Theatre in downtown Abingdon, Virginia.

GLASGOW, MT POP. 3,700 URL kltz.com Talk about the middle of nowhere: The nearest Kmart is 100 miles away! This county seat of ranchers and farmers usually does just fine with its limited contact with the outside world. But in recent months, a tornado hit a town 60 miles to the north, and residents had to send photos to federal disaster officials; Glasgow held a multigenerational class reunion and wanted the graduates who couldn't make it to be able to attend, virtually; and many locals decided they needed a fish hatchery—so they successfully rallied support from the rest of Montana. How did they do it? "The Net helps us get the word throughout the rest of the state," says Tim Phillips, program director for local radio station KLTZ, which maintains the de facto town site. Glasgow is wired with DSL through the Nemont Telephone Cooperative, which serves rural Montana, while the state's largest city, Billings, contends with the non-DSL-providing Qwest. **HOW WOULD GLASGOW'S MOST FAMOUS RESIDENT HAVE USED THE NET?** Emory M. Robotham, director of Glasgow's city-county library: "Manson Bailey Jr., who passed away recently, was a gentleman steeped in the history of the community. If you wanted somebody who knew about how it all began, he was the man to call. He would have loved to explore Web sites on genealogy—that's a major emphasis of his church."

TOMBALL, TX POP. 9,000 URL tomballonline.com Are the 30-plus antiques stores of Tomball, including Granny's Korner and Just Passin' Thru, prepared for the crush of e-commerce? "I say this to your question: Let me have that problem," responds webmaster Michael Busby, who expects the Web presence of this town of farmhouses and forests to transform into a Yahoo!-style shopping portal any day now. At first, predicts Busby, owner of the Web-development company Internet Villages and Networks, residents will forgo Amazon.com and order from Belinda's Bargain Books on Tomball Parkway. Then customers worldwide will be so enamored of Belinda's selection they'll want to stick around to hear local country station KVST or buy a toilet from Tanks Alot on Cedar Lane. It's a big dream (few of the businesses listed on **TOMBALL ONLINE** have home pages so far), but the ambitious Busby has location (Tomball is about 30 miles northwest of Houston, home of Compaq) and marketing (local TV station KHOU has pledged to help with advertising) on his side. **WHAT'S SOMETHING ABOUT TOMBALL NOBODY OUTSIDE KNOWS?** Ben Griffin, assistant city manager: "Tomball was incorporated by Standard Oil in 1934; up until 1994, all the residents got their natural gas to heat their homes for free. We had a substantial number of people who put in gas-heated swimming pools, and in the winter you could see the steam coming off them."

WINDHAM, NH POP. 11,000 URL www.town.windham.nh.us (official) and www.windhamnh.com/town (unofficial) The battle between Windham's official site and the Windham Independent Web Page hasn't yet escalated into an old-fashioned feud on the scale of the Hatfields and the McCoys. But it's safe to say the competing webmasters don't exactly meet for coffee in this Massachusetts–New Hampshire border town. After retired Bell Laboratories engineer Tom Case, a 29-year resident, erected his Windham page in 1995, he asked town officials to make it official. But they refused, perhaps for public-relations reasons. ("Before and after" photos protesting the demise of a Griffin Park apple tree are at the top of Case's site today.) "Nothing's ever been said to me personally, but maybe privately [town officials] don't like it," Case says. "But I report the news." What does town volunteer Richard Forde, webmaster of the more sedate official site, make of the competition? "Everybody's got a right to express themselves," he says. **WHAT'S SOMETHING ABOUT WINDHAM NOBODY OUTSIDE KNOWS?** "There are a lot of little secrets about Windham. If people knew them, they would move into town," Forde says.

MURRAY, KY POP. 15,000 URL www.murraylink.com In many big cities, connecting to a DSL service or buying a cable modem is a nightmare of bureaucracy and missed installation appointments. But in this land of endless cornfields, the West Kentucky Livestock and Exposition Center, and Murray State University, broadband is no bother at all. Though Murray's $7.5 million investment in a telecommunications system is only now beginning to translate into direct high-speed connections for homes, the town whetted users' appetites by offering cable modems for $27 a month. It's all run through the town-owned Murray Electric System, which competes with the local cable company. Residents "would have to wait several years for this if we didn't do it for them," says Tony Thompson, the electric system's superintendent. **HOW WOULD MURRAY'S BEST-KNOWN RESIDENT HAVE USED THE NET?** "The one famous person we claim is Nathan B. Stubblefield, who is supposedly the true inventor of radio. Of course, Marconi gets the historical credit for it, but people in Murray dispute that. Stubblefield was years ahead of Marconi in transmitting a wirelss signal," Thompson says. "Technologically, he was ahead of his time. So today, with voice-over IP and things like that, I'm sure he would be involved."

STEVE KNOPPER, *a regular contributor to* Yahoo! Internet Life, *has written for* Details, Rolling Stone, *and* Spin.

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID MCGLYNN; DIGITAL ENHANCEMENT: GENE BRESLER; THEATRE: COURTESY OF BARTER THEATRE

HAVE YOU HIT BOTTOM YET? MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR

AOL Addicts Anonymous

One person's 12-step program may help you take the cure, hit the exit button, and kick the habit for good

BY ANGELA G

GEOF KERN

Is your life being taken over by an online service that you've outgrown but don't know how to give up? Do you know in your heart of hearts that there's a better way out there, yet you keep going back for more? Do you wake up nights craving the sight of the triangular Deathstar logo and the sound of "You've got mail!"? Brothers and sisters, it's time to heal yourselves.

ONE We admit that we are powerless over AOL—that our lives have become unmanageable. I remember exactly what triggered my decision to kick the habit—and I'm embarrassed to tell you how low I had to go to hit bottom, before I could admit AOL was a problem in my life. Was it when my friends stopped getting my e-mails, simply because their service providers began blocking @aol.com missives, thanks to their high likelihood of containing spam? Was it how people rolled their eyes when I gave them my e-mail address? No, the final straw came when AOL 6.0 software wouldn't let me start up its browser with any Web page but its own; it opened to AOL's Web site, and that was that. I wasn't looking forward to the DTs (data-access travails), but I knew it was time to become a *recovering* AOL addict.

TWO We believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. But first we have to convince ourselves that there's a power greater than AOL Time Warner.

THREE We make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of that Higher Power. I've already got cable and phone service at my house. I'm sure either one could hook me up to the Internet (though thinking fond thoughts about phone-company tech support is surely a sign of the Apocalypse). And if those guys can't help me out, there are other sound ISPs around.

FOUR We take a fearless inventory of ourselves. One of the reasons I stayed with AOL so long is that it promised to solve all my online problems—e-mail, Web surfing, shopping (shopping!), security, discussion groups—and offer more chat than Arianna Huffington. Once, it really was the all-in-one solution for those of us who didn't want to install a different piece of software for every need. Now, AOL seems just the opposite, demanding that I wait for it to patch a new update at the end of every session.

FIVE We admit to our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. Note to Higher Power, self, and hottbootyyy@aol.com: I am in fact neither 18, nor platinum blonde, nor a 36DD. My name is not Brandii, with either one or two *i*'s. I do not have a red Ferrari, a trust fund, or a bi-curious best girlfriend. I also made up the location and exact wording of my tattoo. I was kidding about cheerleading camp, and inasmuch as I have never even met the Backstreet Boys, you should take any of my remarks about alleged encounters with one or more of them in the purely fictional spirit intended. P.S.: You didn't think I was serious about the virginity thing, did you?

SIX We are entirely ready to have a Higher Power remove all these defects of character. <ring> <ring>

"Hello, this is your friendly local ISP. How may I help you?"

"Uh—oh, wow! I wasn't expecting to talk to a real person! You...you're a real person, right?"

"Yes, miss. May I direct your call to our AOL Refugee consultant?"

"How did you know?"

"Just a hunch."

SEVEN We humbly ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings... and our shortcuts, though God Himself has trouble purging all the chunks of AOL's software from a computer. I knew the AOL software was rude—always downloading stuff at the end of my session when I just wanted to log out—but I didn't realize how *domineering* it was. By the time I ran Uninstall, my AOL directory had ballooned to over 34 megabytes—and that was with nothing in my download folder.

EIGHT We make a list of persons we have harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all. I call that list my address book. Getting off AOL is amends enough.

NINE We continue to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admit it. I wasn't sure I had told everyone that I was on the wagon, so I checked with the folks at AOL to see if they'd be sweet and forward any stray mail to me at my new address. They wouldn't. I nearly fell off the wagon at that point—what if some long-lost beau (or Ed McMahon) was trying to find me and remembered me only as AngelaG? But then I realized that all my old beaux were already in my kill file.

Finally, I needed to tell a few online stores that I'm changing my e-mail address. This is less inconvenient than I expected. Turns out that dot-com stores are happy to take my money no matter how I get to their shops, even though many of them pay lots of money to AOL to have their stores on the service. Nice to know I'm not the only one with a codependent relationship.

TEN We seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with the Higher Power as we understand it. Kicking the habit was hard, but I'm stronger now. Time was, my heart did do a little pitter-patter when the "You've got mail!" guy announced my incoming missives. But I don't need him anymore; I hear enough voices all day long as it is.

Instead of believing the line about "how hard" non-AOL sign-on is and how most AOL addicts end up back on the drug because of it, I took three minutes to read the instructions and followed them. As it turned out, even a little practice quickly makes perfect. I'm clean and sober at last—or at least, my interface is clean and my mailbox is sober. Hey, a girl does what she can.

ELEVEN We integrate our experiences into our lives and move on. After a while on the wagon, the recovering addict often experiences a twinge of nostalgia for the old days. Don't backslide! Instead, get a little taste of the bad old days at **FLIMSHAW: AOL AND OTHER MAIL AND BROWSER SOUNDS [members.aol.com/otverge/flimshaw/sndaol.html]**—all those AOL sounds in one handy file. Admit it: The AOL voices are kind of cute. Closure is important, you know.

TWELVE Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we try to carry this message to AOL addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs. Brothers and sisters, join me! Thirty million of you still stand in the shadow of Steve Case, slaves to the whims of the service that promised to take care of you but instead shackles you to its bulky software and slow connections. You can be saved—healed by the light of the true Internet, the Net beyond AOL, bathed in the glory of the ISPeace that passeth all understanding!

Let the healing begin.

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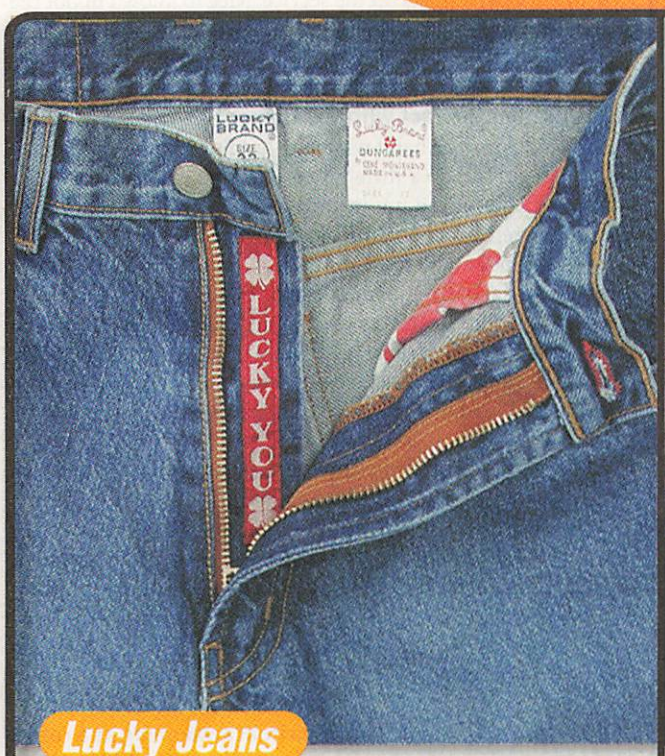

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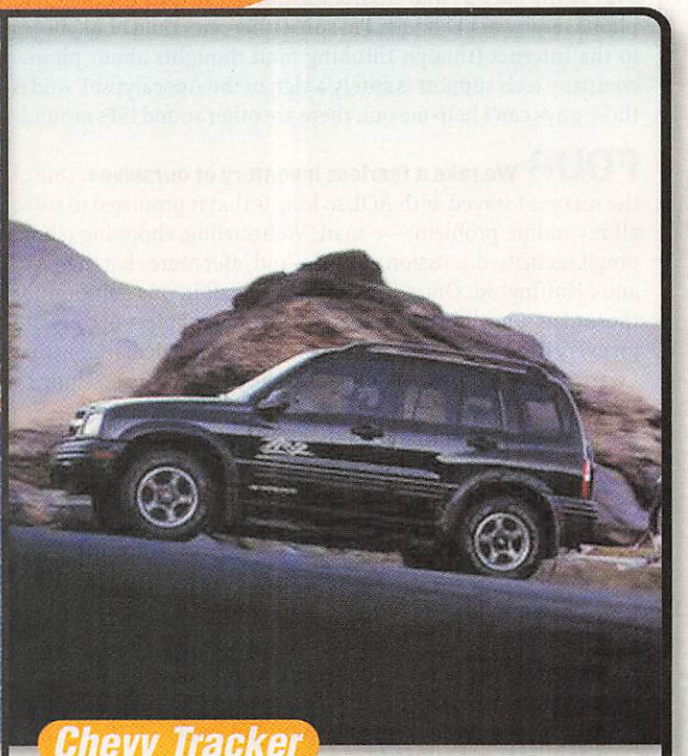

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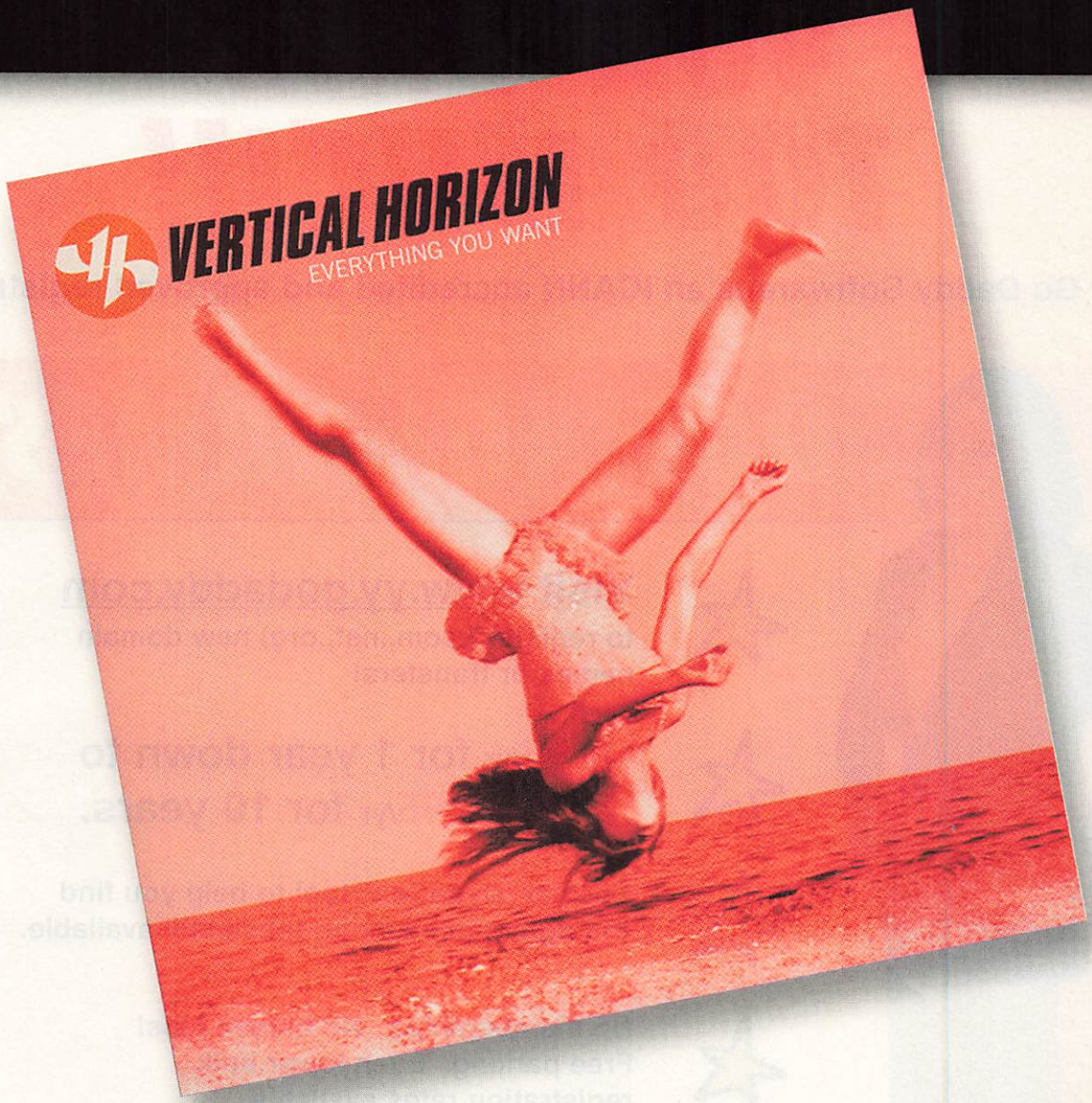

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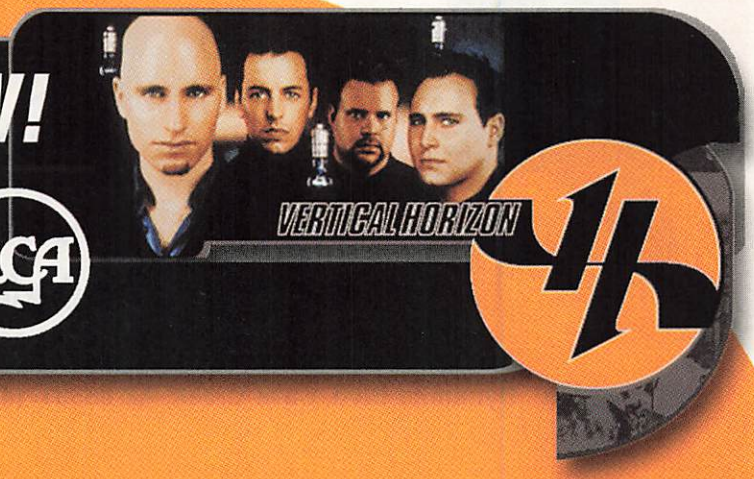

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://WebGuide

WHERE TO, HOW TO, BEST OF: OUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO LIFE ON THE WEB EDITED BY CREE McCREE

SCOTT LAUMANN

BLOOD BROTHERS

By the time the Civil War ended, America's bloodiest conflict had claimed more than 600,000 casualties—and perhaps fittingly, that's roughly the number of sites devoted to the war's history. To bring this vast universe into focus, we consulted a new print guide and did our own forced marching online. For stellar battlefield and home-front sites, see **PAGE 122.**

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New, Notable & Fun

WHAT'S HOT—AND WHAT'S COOL—ON THE WEB THIS MONTH

BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL

RELAUNCH

SONY STYLE MUSICLUB In alliance with CDNOW, Liquid Music, and Sony Music, this site now offers more than 115,000 free and for-purchase digital downloads to members who register for free. Sign up for a customized newsletter to get the scoop on your specified musical interests. **[musiclub.sonystyle.com]**

FEED This left-of-center zine has relaunched with more social commentary than ever. Categories such as Habitat and Vices cover everything from psychotherapy to sonar testing. Exercise your right to vote in Who's Better?, a poll that pits celebrities such as Suge Knight (Menace II Society) and Dean Martin (Menace II Sobriety) against each other. **[feedmag.com]**

YACK.COM The Net entertainment guide just keeps growing. Search for addictive classics like Tetris or demo the latest version of Quake using the new gaming guide. You can also access more than 3,200 Web radio stations using the recently renamed—and vastly expanded—Yack Radio Tuner. **[yack.com]**

SCIENCE

SCITECH DAILY REVIEW From breaking medical news on artificial joints to the latest speculation on the ancient Martian landscape, SciTech's got it covered. Updated every weekday, links point to popular mainstream science sites, such as Discovery.com, as well as to more technical and arcane sources. **[scitechdaily.com]**

FRACTAL MUSIC Experience the sounds and sights of organized chaos via links to destinations where music is created using numeric equations. Got a good head for figures? Download software that lets you compose your own mathematical music. **[thinks.com/webguide/fractal-music.htm]**

THE MERCK MANUAL HOME EDITION This edition of *The Merck Manual*, long a trusted resource for medical professionals, is written for laymen. In addition to the explanations of terms, diseases, and procedures that it's known for, the site has recently incorporated videos and illustrations into its bank. **[merckhomeedition.com]**

GEOGRAPHY

GEOCACHING Can't figure out how that GPS unit is more useful than the road atlas you bought in 1992? Put your techie toy to use when you join this adventurous treasure hunt. Gamers the world over hide and seek stash boxes containing prizes in parks, city buildings, and even underwater, using GPS coordinates to locate the goods. **[geocaching.com]**

FIELDING'S DANGERFINDER If you're not sure what to expect on

PORTAL PATROL

AOL [aol.com] members will benefit from the portal's new AOL Anywhere strategy. Now users can be alerted on their Web-enabled cell phones when designated e-mails reach the inboxes of their AOL accounts. Not to be left in anyone's cyberdust, **YAHOO!** [yahoo.com] enhanced (surprise!) Yahoo! Everywhere, which provides Internet access via PDA, Web-enabled cell phone, and pager.

Hoping to increase the quality of merchandise and generate more revenue, **YAHOO! AUCTIONS** [auctions.yahoo.com] has started charging sellers a listing fee—between 20 cents and $2.25, depending on the item's value. The good news? The site won't charge closing fees or take a percentage of the final sale.

GO.COM is going, going, gone. In a quandary as to whether the portal could ever turn a profit, the Walt Disney Company decided to pull the plug on the megasite before it answered the question.

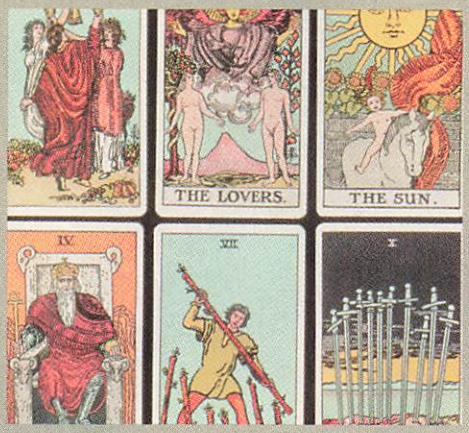
SPOTLIGHT

Greening the Web

ALTHOUGH WE DEDICATE ONLY ONE CALENDAR DAY A YEAR to Mother Earth, you don't have to wait until April 22 to get involved. Visit the **EARTHDAYNETWORK [www.earthday.net]** to learn about activities and eco-issues in your area. Then click over to the **ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION [rachel.org]** for scientific, but readable, articles. For tips on living a more eco-conscious lifestyle, try **CARE2.COM**, where you can join an online community devoted to environmental awareness. Support organic farming by finding nearby marketplaces at **LOCAL HARVEST [localharvest.org]**. Then go outside and play! At **GORP: GREAT OUTDOOR RECREATION PAGES [gorp.com]** you'll find destination-based information on all sorts of adventurous activities.

FRESH PRODUCE: Locate nearby farmers' markets at Local Harvest.

MISSING LINK? SITES WE SUGGEST YOU SAMPLE TOGETHER



It's All in the Cards

ALTHOUGH YOU'LL NEVER FIND THEM HANGing on a wall at the Louvre, the collectible **MONSTER CARDS OF THE 1950'S AND 1960'S** [horrorcards.org] are works of art in their own B-movie sort of way—especially to those who were playing mad scientist while the other neighborhood kids tossed a football. Some may relish the agony of victims being carried off by the aliens of the original *Mars Attacks* trading cards (1962), but we'll be saving up for the $300 *Dark Shadows* set.

If cards that divine the future are more your style, browse the collection at **AECLECTIC TAROT** [aeclectic.net/tarot]. The site showcases the artwork of more than 250 tarot decks, and also rates and reviews them. Whether you prefer the elegant design of art nouveau, the mystical influence of William Blake, or the whimsy of the Wonderland deck—which casts Tweedledee and Tweedledum as the Lovers—you'll find your niche here. Don't buy into the cosmic mumbo jumbo? Even skeptics will enjoy the fanciful images, such as the teddy bears that cavort in Peter Wood's Hugobian deck.

CUT THE DECK: Shuffle through classic monster cards or lay out a spread of tarot readings.

that spring snowboarding trip to Iran, check the info here on global danger zones. For the record: If you don't mind the "Death to America" posters, it's safe to hit the slopes in Khomeini country. [comebackalive.com/df/dplaces.htm]

FOOD

SLOW Before McDonald's ruled the world, people used to sit around the dinner table, eat leisurely home-cooked meals, and enjoy good conversation. Part of the Slow Food movement, which seeks to recapture the "right to pleasure," this site details techniques of preparing traditional foods, from chocolate to raw-milk cheese. Take your time here; it's worth stopping to smell the pheasant croquettes. [www.slowfood.com/food]

TAQUITOS.NET Prefer life in the fast-food lane? Stop by this tribute to crunchy delights. With discriminating reviewers who seem to have sampled every chip ever manufactured, you're sure to get the skinny on fattening snacks. Attention doughnut lovers: You'll be drooling over the slightly tangential but nevertheless yummy Krispy Kreme appreciation page. [taquitos.net]

SPOOFS

LEGO STAR WARS TRILOGY In a galaxy far, far away (that is, Japan), one man spent 2,500 hours re-creating the *Star Wars* trilogy entirely with Lego blocks. Although you'll have to imagine the light sabers swooshing, and Lego Han Solo's got nothing on Harrison Ford, the 180 still scenes posted here are an awe-inspiring tribute to obsession. [www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~mbsf]

THE ILLUSTRATED BEOWULF If you never read *Beowulf* in college and can't bear the thought of attempting it now, curl up with this abridged version of the tale, starring Bill Clinton in the lead role. Annotated photographs tell the story, while word balloons provide dialogue: "I'll smash that crazy fool Grendel with my bare hands!" [people.cornell.edu/pages/jbw17/beowulf]

YOUNG ADULTS

CONSUMER EDUCATION FOR TEENS High school students from Washington state established this site to help other teens avoid telemarketing scams, understand pyramid schemes, and think twice about impulse shopping. [www.wa.gov/ago/youth]

STUDY GUIDES AND STRATEGIES Serious students know that learning how to learn is half the battle of making it through school. With advice for managing stress and time, and tips on how to take notes in class, this site teaches teens to analyze their own study habits in order to improve their approach to classwork. [iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides]

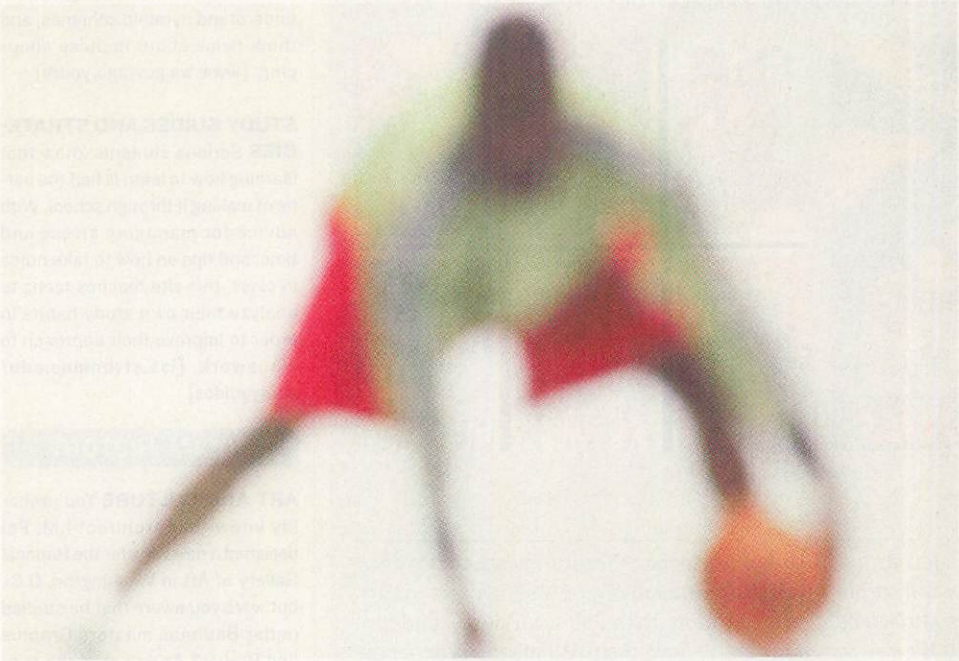
SOCIAL HISTORY

ART AND CULTURE You probably know that architect I.M. Pei designed a new wing for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., but were you aware that he studied under Bauhaus masters Gropius and Breuer? As you read the succinct articles here, link to related artists, influences, and movements that follow the labyrinth of history. [artandculture.com]

BEAUTYWORLDS.COM Tracing the "culture of beauty," this site gives equal time to the myth of Cleopatra, the ancient ideals of the Aztecs, and modern fashion. Pieces such as "Rethinking Barbie" help us both appreciate and deconstruct our obsession with appearances. [beautyworlds.com]

TAROT CARDS: HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS; ELIZABETH TAYLOR AS CLEOPATRA: CORBIS

TREND SPOTTING BY BILGE EBIRI



Fantasy Leagues Rule!

Make-believe games are drawing **big numbers** to sports sites

FANTASY SPORTS LEAGUES—WHICH LET FANS manage imaginary teams that use actual player statistics to compete against one another—have been around for years. But before the Net came along, they were primarily the domain of ledger-toting fanatics with one ear to the phone and one eye on the latest edition of *USA Today* Sports. Now the games—played online both for fun and for money—are becoming a national pastime.

That should come as no surprise, given the Net's ability to provide reams of stats. But what *is* surprising is how much fantasy leagues are boosting traffic to real-life sports sites.

While **SANDBOX [sandbox.com]** and similar sites cater specifically to those looking for fantasy action, the bigger sports-hub sites have found themselves benefiting greatly from the trend. Take **CBS SPORTSLINE.COM [sportsline.com]**, which announced in August that it would begin offering its Fantasy Football Commissioner software for free. "We have seen record-breaking numbers since the switch," says Michael Levy, SportsLine's founder and chief executive. Thanks to its fantasy features, traffic is, by one measure, up nearly 200 percent from the previous year. All across the board—from **ESPN.COM** to **CNN/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED [cnnsi.com]**—fantasy leaguers are driving online sports traffic.

"The impact of the exploding fantasy market is hard to deny," SportsLine spokesman Alex Riethmiller confirms, "especially considering the loyalty and 'stickiness' these leagues produce. I think you'll continue to see major [sports] sites cater to the fantasy players."

Will that eventually shortchange users looking for more traditional news and scores? Not necessarily. Sports fantasists like a bit of real-world action now and then.

QUICK CLICKS: Think you know which upcoming music releases will crack the Top 40? Test your ears at **PICKTHEHITS.COM**, where you can listen to new songs and then decide if they'll be chart busters or not.

MUSIC

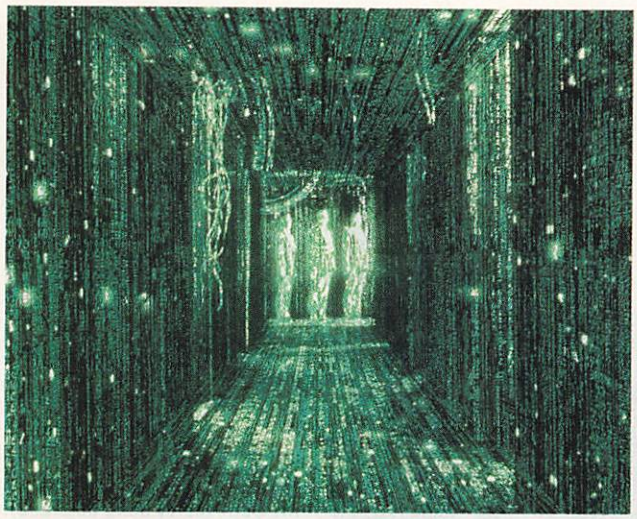
Jazz Fest

GROUND ZERO New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival Forget Mardi Gras. Music lovers know that the best annual event in the Big Easy is the Jazz Fest, which draws hundreds of world-class artists and more than half a million revelers. For news about this year's festival (April 27 to May 6), check this official site. Photos from prior festivals can get you in the mood, and video of folks rocking out and chowing down should have you booking tickets immediately. **[insideneworleans.com/partners/nojazzfest]**

GIGS AT A GLANCE Off-Beat When the fairgrounds close at sunset, Jazz Fest spills into the streets, and thanks to this site, there's no excuse for missing a gig. Enter the day you want to let *les bons temps rouler*, and Offbeat will tell you what's happening at every club in town. Think Buckwheat Zydeco is a breakfast food? Peruse past articles from this New Orleans music bible and you'll be an expert in no time. When you hit town, pick up the free print magazine for detailed festival schedules. It's the best souvenir out there. **[offbeat.com]**

BE THERE NOW WWOZ Jazz Fest veterans will tell you to tune your radio to 90.7 FM the minute you arrive. Listener-supported WWOZ is one of the best stations in the country, and thanks to streaming audio, it now reaches way

BASKETBALL: HASSAN JADANE/NONSTOCK; FESTIVAL: PHILIP GOULD/CORBIS



BONUS TRACKS: Discover hidden features on DVDs like *The Matrix.*

STRUG: STEPHANIE RAUSSER/CORBIS OUTLINE; *THE MATRIX*: FOTO FANTASIES

beyond New Orleans. Tune in any time of year to hear blues, jazz, Cajun, zydeco, gospel, Brazilian, and Caribbean music, and catch live broadcasts and interviews during the festival. [wwoz.org]

KING OF CLUBS **Tipitina's** Leave it to the folks at Tip's to create a Web site as funky as the club itself. Where else could you check out video and audio clips of Kermit Ruffins, Marva Wright, and Cyril Neville? Weekly cybercasts bring the spirit of the Crescent City to your desktop, and links to individual artist sites keep the party going. [tipitinas.com] —CHRISTY EPSTEIN

MOVIES

Digital Video Discs

WHERE TO BUY **Amazon.com** Citing Amazon as the place to buy things online is cliché, perhaps, but the retailer's wide selection of DVDs, its great prices, and its speedy delivery set it apart from the pack. [amazon.com]

WHERE TO RENT **Netflix** For $20 a month, Netflix lets you rent an unlimited number of DVDs, but you can keep only three at a time. Better yet, there are no due dates or late fees—which means you can hold on to *Silence of the Lambs: Special Edition* long enough to watch all seven deleted scenes. [netflix.com]

UPCOMING RELEASES **The Digital Bits** What DVD titles are in the works? What bonus features can you expect? Come here to find out. Staff members regularly meet with movie studios, prodding them for information. You also can find detailed new-release reviews, which cover those nuances that DVD addicts adore. [thedigitalbits.com]

HIDDEN TREASURES **DVD Easter Eggs** If you have the new *Terminator 2* DVD, you know it contains two versions of the classic sci-fi flick. What you might not know is that it also has a third one, which you can see only by punching in a secret code (82997, the date of the apocalypse). Such hidden features are called Easter eggs. Locating the goodies isn't as hard as destroying a robot from the future, though, thanks to this site, which can help you unearth buried treasure on such titles as *Fight Club, The Matrix,* and *Independence Day.* [dvdeastereggs.com/easter_eggs.html] —PAUL SEMEL

JUST FOR FUN

April Fool!

BE PREPARED **The Ultimate List of Practical Jokes** Some wiseacres like to pull legs all year long. For the rest of us, April I is the day we're inspired to don a joker's cap and join in the monkeyshines. If you're looking to tickle friends, family, and coworkers with tricks more original than putting salt in the sugar bowl, check this page, which details hundreds that can set your devious little mind churning. [www.lysator.liu.se/jokes/practical.html]

JOKERS WILD **RottenEggs** The youths who congregate here treat pranks as a challenge sport, and their stunts can be pretty daring. In fact, each escapade is rated for health and legal risks. Would-be imitators of the Irvine Amphitheater Billboard Makeover, for instance, are warned about cuts and bruises, not to mention vandalism charges—all of which we can enjoy vicariously. [rotteneggs.com]

CYBERSHENANIGANS **Gags and Pranks** Let your fingers do the hoaxing with free software programs that mystify virtual victims without causing any real damage. Fake error messages, random drive crunchers, and the truly terrifying Blue Screen Saver are among the "gotcha!" gags. [geocities.com/netsur24/gags.html]

OLD MASTERS **The Idiosyntactix Culture Jammer's Encyclopedia** This rogues' gallery honors legendary impostors, quacks, counterfeiters, hackers, and other assorted pranksters throughout history. One page is devoted to the mythological figure of the trickster, including that modern master of mayhem, Wile E. Coyote. [www.syntac.net/hoax/index.php] —FRANK GREEN

GUEST GUIDE BY EDWARD R. LOVETT

Olympic Gymnast Kerri Strug

Kerri Strug is frozen in America's minds and hearts as the elfin gymnast who overcame an ankle injury to perform a dazzling vault that gave the U.S. its team gold medal during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Although still diminutive, Strug has grown up. She's attending Stanford University, and from time to time, she provides fitness tips on Emazing.com—when she's not busy hitting the books or hitting her favorite Web sites:

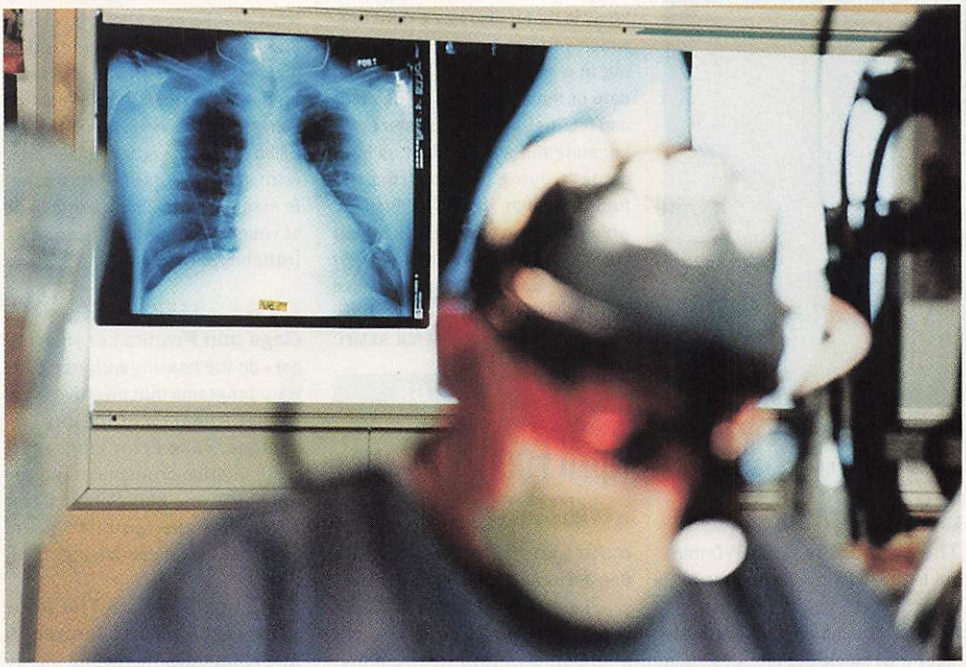
ATHLETESDIRECT
I'm just like everyone else: I'm kinda curious about sports stars, so I log on to check what this person or that person is up to. This site has a lot of great athletes involved, including many that I'm a fan of: Anna Kournikova, Tara Lipinski, Kobe Bryant, Troy Aikman, Steve Young...the list goes on and on. [athletesdirect.com]

USA GYMNASTICS
I come here to get my updates on the competitions, and to get the inside scoop on how everyone is doing. [usa-gymnastics.org]

STANFORD CARDINAL
I'm friends with a lot of the players at my school. Being involved in athletics, I understand what they're going through. You can click to get the results for any Stanford team or to meet the members. I go there a lot. [gostanford.com]

EMAZING.COM
I subscribe to the horoscope. I'm a Scorpio—a lot of people say, "Ooh, you're one of those!" They also have relationship tips. I definitely need to look at that today. I'm a communications major, but there are some issues going on here and there! [emazing.com]

VITAL SIGNS BY JOANNE CHEN



The Net as Survival Tool

Search sites to find **clinical trials for cancer** and other diseases

FOR MANY CANCER PATIENTS, THE INTERNET IS a source of solace (see "Cancer Resources," page 117): There are sites that demystify medical jargon, offer support, and deliver facts and figures. But few people realize that, as a way to track down clinical trials, the Web can be a survival tool. ■ According to the National Cancer Institute, only 5 percent of cancer patients participate in trials at any given time. Misconceptions are partly to blame; many people apparently think they'll be stuck with a placebo, for instance. (In fact, most trials compare new treatments with existing ones.) Another problem is that finding the right trial takes patience. No single site provides a comprehensive roster.

CLINICALTRIALS.GOV lists primarily government-backed studies of experimental treatments for dozens of forms of cancer and hundreds of other diseases. In 1997, the Food and Drug Modernization Act established a national database of clinical trials, but the provision lacked funding, so participation by pharmaceutical companies is poor. Of the roughly 1,800 clinical trials in the National Cancer Institute database, a mere 185 originate in the private sector—far fewer than would be expected, given the number of industry trials.

Both **CENTERWATCH [centerwatch.com]** and **EMERGINGMED.COM** can help you find corporate trials. But the most extensive industry listings are at **PHRMA [phrma.org]**, home of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America. Click on Search for Cures, then New Medicines in Development, and finally Explore the New Medicines in Development Database to choose from massive pull-down menus of diseases. You can retrieve a list of experimental drugs and the names and locations of firms that are conducting trials. Phone numbers aren't listed, but a quick search for a company's Web site should yield that information.

To research efficiently, cancer patients should know the date and specifics of the diagnosis, the tumor's stage, its location, and current treatment. Once you've narrowed the search results, work the phones. Give your information to a research nurse or assistant, then ask if you qualify for a clinical trial. If your doctor isn't helpful with the process—and some are not—you can reach out to online support groups such as **CANCERCARE [cancercare.org]** (reviewed on page 117).

DERMATOLOGY

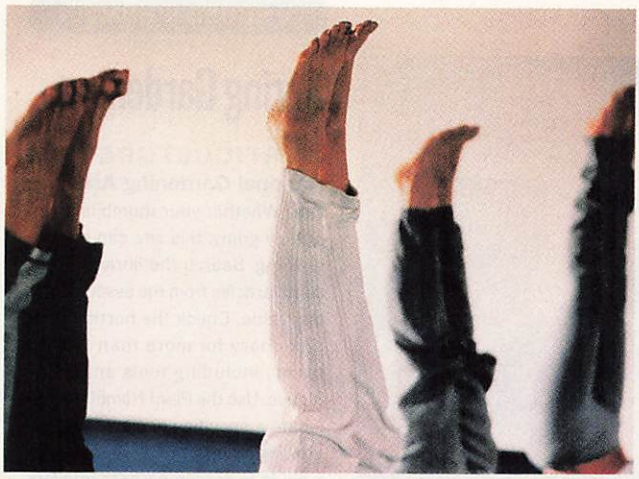
Healthy Skin

VISUAL AIDS Healthology Choose Skin Health from the pull-down menu to access a plethora of epidermal information, from the use of moisturizers to facts about laser treatments. The in-depth articles by doctors are instructive. Did you know, for instance, that 50 percent of all new cancer cases in the U.S. involve the skin? We especially like the site's video Webcasts, in which dermatologists discuss such subjects as "Keeping Beautiful Under the Sun" (carry a big umbrella). **[healthology.com]**

DERMAL DISORDERS Mediconsult: Dermatological Health Center Get news here about research and treatments for various afflictions, including vitiligo and psoriasis. Consult the Medilibrary for information on everything from common burns to necrotizing fasciitis, the so-called flesh-eating bacterial infection. The site is linked to several helpful organizations, such as the National Rosacea Society and the American Academy of Dermatology. **[www.mediconsult.com/skin]**

ANTIAGING ADVICE Prevention: Skin Care "Skin is like a brand-new pair of underwear," an essay at this site says. "In the beginning, the elastic is snug and resilient, stretching and snapping right back into place." We all know what happens when the elastic wears out. Enter your age to get detailed advice on what you can do to maintain a healthy, youthful glow.

DOCTOR: MATTHEW SEPTIMUS/PHOTONICA; TOWELS: KAZ CHIBA/PHOTONICA



Doctors here recommend vitamins C and E and selenium, as well as Retin-A cream, vitamin C lotion, and vitamin E oil after sun exposure to stave off the inevitable. Take the quiz to see if you know how to treat your epidermis. [prevention.com/healing/skincare]

CREAMS & LOTIONS The Healthy Skin Shop Get a free personal consultation, plus recommendations for Healthy Skin products that may help alleviate problems. Fill out the questionnaire to receive your evaluation, which includes suggestions for nutritional supplements such as ester C. Called "the fountain of youth," it is said to ward off the aging process ($17.50 for a bottle of 100 tablets). The "buttery, yet utterly greaseless" Moisture Replenishing Creme ($24 for two ounces) purports to "normalize" your skin in 15 days. Samples are available for $3.50 for shipping and handling. [healthyskinshop.com]

—PAMELA DES BARRES

MIND/BODY

Yoga Practice

BEGINNERS CLASS Yogabasics.com In the West, yoga is often mistaken for some kind of New Age stretching regimen. In fact, the goal of traditional yoga practice is nothing less than a complete union of body, mind, and spirit. This sleek and supple site offers a brief historical overview of the ancient discipline, as well as information about the major schools and styles. The emphasis, however, is on the benefits of hatha yoga, which develops the physical body. To encourage practice at home, there's an illustrated guide to yogic postures and links to free MP3 downloads of instructional tapes. You can even tune in to Yoga Music Radio, which broadcasts soothing sounds 24 hours a day. [yogabasics.com]

FIND A TEACHER The Yoga Site You're interested in yoga and want to find a nearby class in Ashtabula, Ohio. Or perhaps you're planning a vacation and would love to brush up on your headstands Down Under. In both cases, you can consult this site, which provides directories of teachers and yoga workshops worldwide. Feature articles discuss using yogic therapies to ameliorate chronic pain, stress, attention deficit disorder, and other ailments. [yogasite.com]

EXOTIC RETREATS Barbara Luboff's Yoga in Mexico; Yoga Travel Nothing beats practicing sun salutations on a secluded Mexican beach north of Puerto Vallarta—except, perhaps, chanting *om* in a turreted manor nestled in the Corsican mountains. Choose either setting when you plan a retreat with veteran teacher Barbara Luboff, whose popular workshops feature a gentle, flowing Anusara-style yoga. Looking for even more exotic environs? Yoga Travel can whisk you to the Andes, where you might balance in eagle pose near the Incan ruins of Machu Picchu. Or join a pilgrimage from Rishikesh, "the yoga capital of the world," to the source of the Ganges River in the majestic Himalayas. [yogainmexico.com]; [www.yogatravel.com]

—LORENA HAVENS, CARL FRANZ

ESSENTIALS

NUTRITION

CSPI: CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST
[www.cspinet.org]
The CSPI site keeps abreast of food safety issues, and its quizzes can help you gauge your nutritional knowledge.

CBS HEALTHWATCH BY MEDSCAPE
[healthwatch.medscape.com]
Select Nutrition from the pull-down menu to access articles, discussion boards, and tips, or submit questions to an expert.

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION: DELICIOUS DECISIONS
[deliciousdecisions.com]
The AHA has assembled this site to help us eat smarter.

THE VEGETARIAN RESOURCE GROUP
[vrg.org]
Vegetarians and vegans will find recipes, books, and dietary info here.

ONCOLOGY

Cancer Resources

START HERE Oncology.com Getting information is the first step toward empowering cancer patients and their families. Oncology.com, a *Y-Life* Gold Star winner with a first-class advisory board, provides reliable news and information to consumers, health-care professionals, and others affected by the illness. Go to Newly Diagnosed to look up cancer by type for a disease summary, treatment options, coping techniques, and other resources. [oncology.com]

LOCAL SERVICES American Cancer Society The health challenge posed by cancer is obvious. It's the inconveniences associated with treatment that can make patients feel as if their lives have been turned inside out. Fortunately, the ACS can help with such tasks as finding rides to the hospital, locating wig shops and Look Good...Feel Better boutiques, and identifying community programs and support services. Living with Cancer addresses day-to-day concerns so that patients can become more proactive. [cancer.org]

NEWS & RESEARCH CancerNet A service of the National Cancer Institute, CancerNet provides news on research studies leading to promising treatments and prevention. Informed patients know the right questions to ask their doctors, ensuring the best possible care and outcome. The site's Treatment Options section discusses traditional as well as alternative therapies. Patients also get the chance to help find a cure in Clinical Trials. [cancernet.nci.nih.gov]

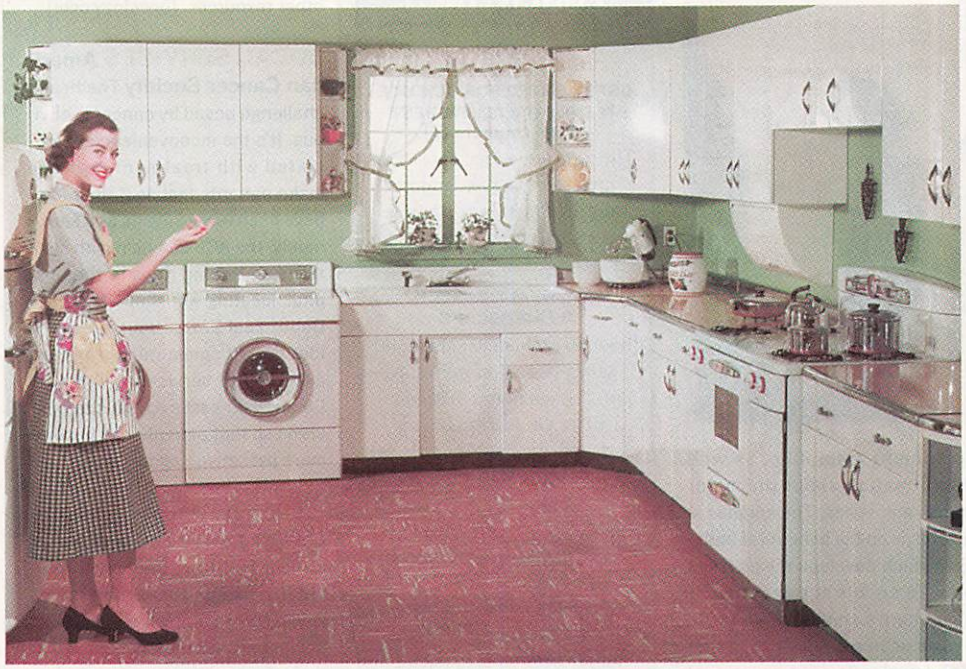
SUPPORT & EDUCATION CancerCare Free professional help for people with all types of cancer is just a mouse click away. The nonprofit CancerCare provides online support groups, virtual workshops and teleconferences, links to cancer-specific sites, advice on financial aid, help with locating and understanding clinical trials, and referrals. [cancercare.org]

SURVIVORS UNITE WebMD Health: Member Communities Doctors and loved ones can sympathize with patients' plights, but there's nothing like connecting with others who share the cancer experience firsthand. The good-humored WebMD discussion boards can turn strangers into friends. On the site's bulletin boards and in its chatrooms, and in member-written columns, patients encourage one another and compare notes. [my.webmd.com/roundtable]

—HEIDI LAFLECHE

YOGA: ENRICO FANTONI/NONSTOCK

THE HOME FRONT BY CHRISTY EPSTEIN



Cleaning Out the Clutter

In the spring, a surfer's fancy lightly turns to **thoughts of...brooms!**

DO YOU KNOW THE STRIDES THAT HAVE been made in electrostatic dry sweeping? Soon you will. Spring is under way, and the millennial cleaning you swore you would do last year remains undone. The time has come to face your fears at **ORGANIZEDHOME.COM**, the Web's best resource for domestic efficiency.

Cynthia Townley Ewer, the site's creator, may border on obsessive-compulsive, but we say more power to her. Ewer's Cleaning Lessons from the Pros kicks off with setting a time slot for cleaning, then moves to motivational music and works up to double-fisted dusting. An entire section of the site is dedicated to breaking the vicious cycle of clutter, and there are numerous message boards on which to commiserate with other incorrigible slobs. Once you've completed De-Clutter 101, take organization to the next level by visiting the Hi-Tech Housewife page, where you can learn how to get your PalmPilot to fly you to home-management heaven.

What to do with all the hidden treasures unearthed on the journey to a simpler life? Sell them, of course. Everything you need to know about transforming castoffs into cash is at **HOW TO MAKE HUGE PROFITS WITH GARAGE SALES [insiderreports.com/bizrprts/b7002.htm]**. Remember, promotion is just as important as merchandise. Submit a free advertisement to **YARD SALE SEARCH! [yardsalesearch.com]**, a national classifieds database that even helps you create an eye-catching sign to post in your neighborhood.

Once your humble abode is cleared of the debris that threatened to bury you, a few surprises might emerge, such as stains on the carpet and rings on the coffee table. Enter **HINTS FROM HELOISE [heloise.com]**, America's favorite household adviser since 1959; the torch was passed from mother to daughter in 1977. The Queen of Clean's Top 10 Hints address common domestic disasters, from candle wax on the rug to crayon marks on painted walls. The Stain Remover Calendar can prepare you for whatever seasonal muck comes your way when you tackle the job at hand.

Householders, start your sweepers: Ready, set, clean!

HOUSE & HOME

Spring Gardening

HORTICULTURE HUB
National Gardening Association Whether your thumb is green or only grimy, this site can get you growing. Search the library for in-depth articles from the association's magazine. Check the horticultural dictionary for more than 15,000 terms, including tools and techniques. Use the Plant Namefinder to locate a specific species. Regional growing reports, online courses, and a guide to gardening-gear retailers add to the site's bountiful harvest. **[nationalgardening.org]**

NATURAL GROWTH
Organic Gardening The Web companion to the popular Rodale Press magazine offers a whole crop of advice for making your flowers and edibles flourish without synthetic pesticides and herbicides. Get weekly gardening tips and zone-specific advice from regional experts, or visit the message boards to discuss squash pests, chipper/shredders, and countless other issues with fellow naturalists. **[organicgardening.com]**

COUNTRY BIBLE **The Old Farmer's Almanac** Luddites, beware. One of America's most trusted sources for garden guidance has gone electronic, and the online version has one big advantage over that dog-eared edition you keep by the rocking chair: It's updated daily, not yearly. You still get all the classic goodies, such as a planting table, watering guides, and long-range forecasts. But you'll also find slick Internet-only features, including daily *Old*

1950S KITCHEN: BETTMANN/CORBIS; GRASS: LAURA JOHANSEN/NONSTOCK; TABLE SETTING: MICHAEL SKOGLUND

Farmer's Almanac radio reports. [almanac.com]

URBAN PLOWBOYS **Urban Agriculture Notes** The quality and quantity of information available at this vast site make its cumbersome design pardonable. Whether you're researching agricultural development in Beijing or you just need to outwit the rat that has invaded your rooftop compost bin, you can find help here. The site's articles, links, and research findings cover the gamut of the issues raised by city farming. [cityfarmer.org]

FIELD OF LINKS **Garden-Surf** How did gardeners spend winter days before the Web? It's difficult to imagine, in light of the dizzying array of horticulture sites. Thankfully, there's a search engine specifically for lovers of the soil. You can scour the Web by keyword or category, from Plants to People (such as landscapers and botanists). [gardensurf.com]

—ALEXIS ADAMS

COMMUNITY

Gays & Lesbians

RAINBOW FLAGSHIP **Planet Out** For the estimated 10 percent of the population that is homosexual, bisexual, or transgender, Planet Out provides a site on which to camp proudly and safely. From advice on money, love, and sex to interviews with the freshest young celebrity beefcake, you'll find everything but a closet in which to hide, with the latest news about domestic-partnership legislation holding hands with stories about gay giraffes and pelicans. Add message boards, polls, movie reviews, radio shows, shopping, personal ads, and chat, and Planet Out begins to look as festive as the colorful gay-pride events it sponsors around the world. A recent merger with Gay.com, the site's main competitor, probably ensures that it'll be leading the parade for a long time to come. [planetout.com]

YOUNG ADULTS **Mogenic** Life can be tough for gay and lesbian teens, who are often the butt of jokes, insults, and acts of violence by intolerant classmates, resulting in a higher-than-average suicide rate. For such kids, finding a community of friends on the Internet can be a lifesaver. Mogenic provides peer-penned stories and advice to help queer and questioning kids feel not only normal but cool. Although the site is based in Australia, users can make friends closer to home through free personals. [mogenic.com]

CHARITY QUEENS **The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, Inc.** Since their first appearance at an antinuclear protest in San Francisco in 1980, the men dressed in colorful nuns' habits and clown makeup known as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence have become a fixture at public events in the Bay Area. Underneath the outrageous drag are compassionate souls who raise awareness of important issues, not to mention raising thousands of dollars for gay-friendly social service agencies. Their Web site contains a history of the order, loads of fun pictures, a guide to upcoming events, and links to sister orders around the world. [thesisters.org]

—FRANK GREEN

RELATIONSHIPS

Advice Columns

PRACTICAL MAGIC **Ask Dr. Tracy** The Web is chockablock with mushy advice for the lovelorn, but self-help author Tracy Cabot, who has a doctorate in psychology, answers heartfelt queries with straight talk. Case in point: She told one woman to forgive her husband's affair—but only after seeking a little revenge on his mistress. "Tell her she might find you with a picket sign outside of her house with a big blowup of the picture you found of her naked," Cabot suggested. Sounds like a plan to us. [loveadvice.com]

THE SEX FILES **The Answer Man** Claiming to have an "uncanny understanding of the human condition," the Answer Man handles steamy inquiries, mostly from young women, about such touchy subjects as breast size, how a man feels about having sex during menstruation, and condom use. (If the guy won't wear one, the AM says, he's a "total scumbag!") Visitors can also Ask Each Other for advice. [theaman.com]

PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION **Salon.com: Garrison Keillor** Folk humorist Keillor tackles the perils of daily life in the guise of Mr. Blue. A typically keen response to an Ask Mr. Blue tale of woe: "Someday when you're 85 and feeling feisty, you'll tell your granddaughter this story over lunch, sipping your martini, and the dear girl will come away admiring you even more for the interesting life you've led." Keillor then offers sound suggestions to help get the writer out of the "interesting" story and on her way to that grandkid. [salon.com/directory/topics/garrison_keillor]

ALL IN THE FAMILY **Everybody's Uncle** Why ask an "outsider" to resolve your problems when you can run your pressing questions by a virtual relative? Everybody's Uncle offers unbiased counsel on money matters, personal turmoil, and occupational hazards. His crackerjack advice on how to land that coveted job? "If you have to walk in cold, clone a network news anchor's appearance." [everybodysuncle.com]

ANTIQUE TIPS **Miss Abigail's Time Warp Advice** This site's amazing library of old books is full of pithy homilies that can help resolve modern dilemmas. Here's some ageless wisdom from *The Woman You Want to Be* (1942): "We take our first step toward poise by learning to relax." [missabigail.com]

—PAMELA DES BARRES

ESSENTIALS

WINE LOVERS

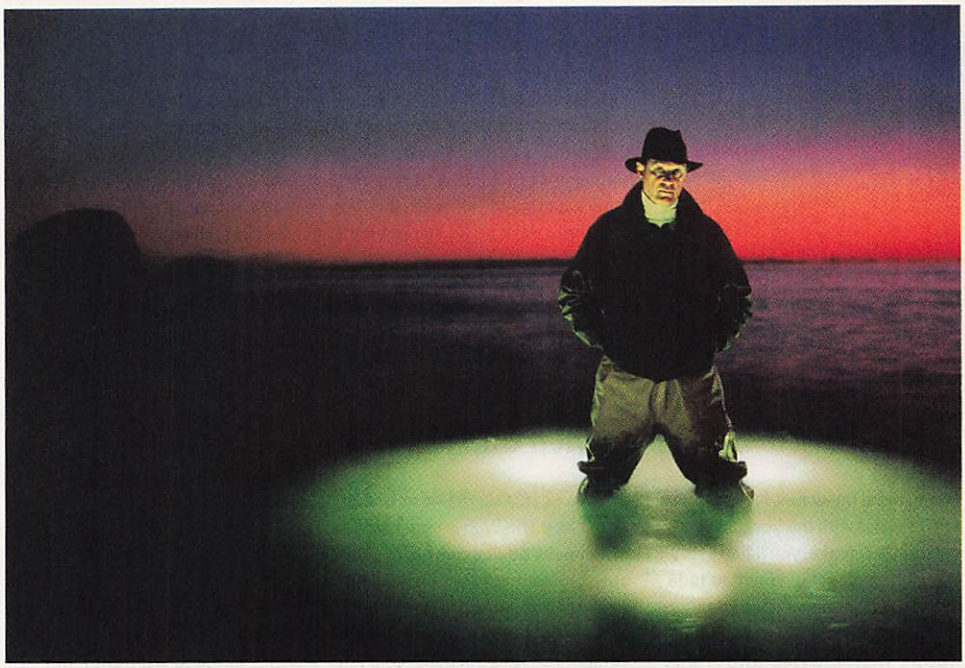
WINE.COM
[wine.com]
This modestly priced e-commerce site was founded by a sommelier, who offers helpful descriptions of the vintages.

EVINEYARD
[evineyard.com]
Online shoppers love this virtual store for its wide selection from independent wineries and commercial enterprises.

WINEACCESS.COM
[wineaccess.com]
A destination for sharing tasting notes and travel reviews. Search for vendors that deliver the goods in your area.

WINEUPDATE.COM
[wineupdate.com]
Connoisseurs and novices alike are likely to enjoy browsing the news here, as well as links for publications, supplies, and dining.

BRAIN WAVES BY KEVIN DELANEY



The Drive to Strive

Climb the **steps to success** with some of today's prime movers

WHICH ANNUAL GALA CAN CLAIM THE most impressive lineup of all-around superstars? It's not the Grammys or the Oscars; it's the Salute to Excellence—a convergence of movers, shakers, and history makers where you're as likely to bump into George Lucas or James Cameron as AOL chief Steve Case or civil rights icon Rosa Parks. But forget about calling Ticketmaster: Attendance is limited to 400 of America's brightest high school students.

If you've never heard of the event or the institution behind it, the **ACADEMY OF ACHIEVEMENT [achievement.org]**, you're not alone. From its inception in 1961 until recent years, the organization had such a low profile it made the Illuminati look like the Book-of-the-Month Club. Even today, the group doesn't send out press releases, and it often bars the media from its events. The academy has, however, put together a Web site that allows the rest of us to gain insight into its most illustrious members.

The site's purpose, academy president Wayne R. Reynolds says, is "to present contemporary heroes to young people. Not just who they are and what they did, but also how they got to be where they are." Thus the Gallery of Achievers emphasizes the Steps to Success: vision, preparation, courage, perseverance, and integrity. At present, there are more than 80 profiles of people who embody those virtues, from Nobel laureates to sports stars and musicians.

One of the most interesting sections is Books that Change Lives, where academy members discuss works that influenced them. Some choices are not surprising; Robert Ballard, who discovered the wreckage of the *Titanic*, was inspired by Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. But who could have guessed that paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould would cite Watty Piper's *The Little Engine That Could* as life-changing literature?

The site is brimming with so many good ideas, it's a shame that not much is being done to promote it to the public. The academy ought to shed its "secret society" image and bring positive role models' stories into the spotlight.

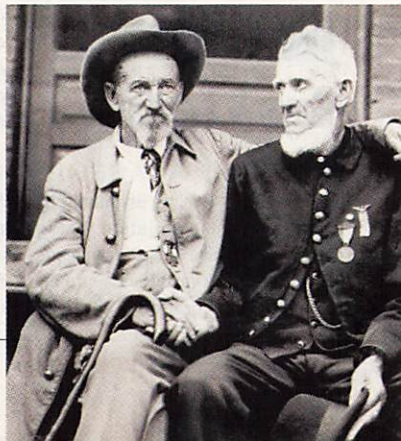
ABOVE: Deep-sea explorer Robert Ballard.
RIGHT: Civil War veterans shake hands in 1913.

HISTORY

The Civil War

A HOUSE DIVIDED The Valley of the Shadow Sixscore and 16 years ago, the War Between the States ended, but interest in the war has not waned. With thousands of Web sites devoted to some aspect of the conflict, the overwhelmed can now turn to an excellent reference guide: *The Civil War on the Web* by William G. Thomas and Alice E. Carter (Scholarly Resources, $18.95), available at Amazon.com and elsewhere. One particularly notable project cited in the guide is the Valley of the Shadow. Compiled from newspaper articles, military and church records, maps, and personal accounts, the site presents the experiences of two counties: one that backed the North; the other, the South. One caveat: This site is a work in progress, and several links may be down. **[valley.vcdh.virginia.edu]**

LAST HUZZAH Bentonville Battleground Less than a month before Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston assembled a ragtag force from existing Rebel armies in Tennessee and its environs to attack Sherman's Federal troops, which were entering North Carolina on their way from Atlanta to Virginia. The enemies clashed near Bentonville, in what was to be the last Southern offensive. This site includes an illustrated synopsis of the struggle, battle maps, and a listing of all participating units by state. **[www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/bentonvi/bentonvi.htm]**



BALLARD: GREGORY HEISLER/CORBIS OUTLINE; VETERANS: CORBIS

HARD TIMES American Slave Narratives Late in the Depression of the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration engaged its writers to interview thousands of African Americans who had endured life in slavery. Here are 13 transcriptions from those recollections, including stories of beatings from vicious masters, the different treatments of house and field slaves, the effects of religion, and frequent bits of survivors' humor. [xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html]

BETTER ANGELS Whitman's *Drum Taps* and Washington's Civil War Hospitals For much of the war, Walt Whitman was a nurse to wounded soldiers in military hospitals. Inspired by *Drum Taps,* his poetic memoirs from that sea of misery, this page investigates the harrowing, often deadly conditions faced by men who went under the blunt knives of 19th-century medicine. [xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/hospital/whitman.htm]

—DONALD MILLER

LITERATURE

Asian American Lit

PROLOGUE SCRAAL: Seattle Contemporary Review of Asian American Literature Whether you're a devoted reader of contemporary Asian American lit or think it's all about Amy Tan, you're bound to appreciate this site. Although it's no longer updated, profiles on notable writers such as Lois-Ann Yamanaka and Shawn Wong are still timely, and audio readings provide an insightful introduction to the genre. [scraal.com]

PLOT POINTS Voices from the Gaps: Maxine Hong Kingston Best known for her 1976 novel *The Woman Warrior,* Kingston has a long-standing love/hate relationship with critics, who have alternately praised and condemned her interpretations of Chinese culture. Still, no one can deny her literary influence. This hub will lead you to message boards and academic discussions. [voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/maxinehongkingston.html]

FLASHBACK In the Heart of a Pilipino American: Carlos Bulosan Author of the seminal ethnobiography *America Is in the Heart,* Bulosan critiqued the U.S. as a land of paradoxes that celebrated equality while condoning racist violence. Blacklisted during the McCarthy era, he died penniless in 1956, when he was 44, achieving posthumous canonical status. Check out a Stanford undergrad's analysis, including a biography. [stanford.edu/~jsangria/bulosan]

RISING SCRIBE Jhumpa Lahiri She won a Pulitzer last year at the tender age of 33 for her first fiction collection, *Interpreter of Maladies.* Lahiri's takes on identity politics and authorial freedom are especially illuminating. This South Asian Women's Network site links to reviews and interviews. [www.sawnet.org/books/jhumpa_lahiri.html]

—LISA KO

BRAINTEASERS

High IQ Societies

IN THE BEGINNING Mensa International You probably think you're pretty smart. (If you're a regular *Y-Life* reader, you no doubt are.) But are you, like, super-duper-genius smart? If you've got an intelligence quotient in the top 2 percent of the population, then you qualify for Mensa, the oldest and best-known brainiac club. Even if you don't make the cut, you can test your gray matter with online puzzles. [mensa.org]

FREE THOUGHT High IQ Society.com If your IQ is in the top 5 percent, you rate a free lifetime membership here. Don't worry about paying for tests and mailing in forms, either: Just take the online quiz and qualify instantly. Once in, you can contribute to the site's e-zine. Recent articles include "Computation of P(14): The Number of Posets with 14 Elements." [highiqsociety.com]

VIP ROOM The IQuadrivium Society You'll have to score at or above the 99.9th percentile to join IQuadrivium. (Hell, some of us can barely pronounce that, let alone qualify for it.) Should you fail to make the grade, you can still sing along with the MIDI rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine." [s-2000.com/iquadrivium]

A MILLION TO ONE Mega Society Talk about exclusive! These folks accept only those who score at or above the one-in-a-million level: an IQ of at least 176. The site obliquely refers to CTMU, "the world's most advanced and comprehensive theoretical construct." If you find out what that is, please let us know. [angelfire.com/ms/mega/OMSHP.html]

—KEVIN DELANEY

SPOTLIGHT BY HEIDI LAFLECHE

Gov Sites for Kids

President Clinton issued a memo in 1997 requiring federal agencies to provide educational content on their Web sites. A sampling from Uncle Sam's server:

NASA KIDS
Space cadets explore planets, black holes, quasars, and galaxies while learning about astronauts and their spacecraft. [kids.msfc.nasa.gov]

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION: KIDS & YOUTH
Aspiring sleuths in grades K to 2 get an inside look at crime prevention and detection. Special attention is given to the dogs that aid in FBI investigations. [www.fbi.gov/kids/kids.htm]

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY: KIDS' PAGE
Students in grades 3 to 12 click on objects inside Cryptic Manor to reveal brain twisters to decipher. [nsa.gov/programs/kids]

TREASURY'S PAGE FOR KIDS
Using a lemonade stand, a lawn-mowing service, and a rock band as examples, government money managers encourage kids to start their own businesses. Savings bonds are recommended for youngsters who don't plan an IPO before junior high—taxes are explained for those who do. [ustreas.gov/kids]

FEMA FOR KIDS
Disaster Action Kids learn how to prepare for floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and other natural threats. [www.fema.gov/kids]

SCIENTISTS: IMAGE BANK; SPACE KID: JOCK MCDONALD/STONE

FINDIT

BY JEREMY CAPLAN

Yes, it's a PC world—but for those of you who **'think different,'** there's a wealth of Mac resources online

ILLUSTRATION: KERI SMITH

MOST OF YOUR FRIENDS USE PCS, AND your workplace is a haven for Wintel machines. Even so, you decided to fly in the face of convention and purchase an Apple G4. ■ Only problem is, it's a Windows world. If you're having trouble connecting with other Macolytes or finding useful software, click to **SITELINK [sitelink.net]**. This Mac hub has an impressive list of links that point to news, shopping, and software sites relevant to Mac users. And don't overlook the obvious. **APPLE [apple.com]** is also a great starting point on the Web; it provides links to software and hardware support online, as well as 20MB of free space for storing photos, movies, or other files.

Beginners who want to learn how to harness the power of their Power Macs should head straight to **MACINSTRUCT [macinstruct.com]**. It has a reader forum and 89 helpful tutorials. Also see **MACFIXIT [macfixit.com]**, which provides commonsense solutions to everyday Mac problems.

Finally, if software's your game, browse through CNET's offerings at **DOWNLOAD.COM**. (Before running a query, make sure to click the Mac link; it's located beneath the search field.) And if you're considering buying Mac software, get some guidance from the experts at **MACREVIEW [macreview.com]**. There, you can view descriptions of programs and see how other Mac sites have rated them. Or go to **EPINIONS.COM**, where you'll unearth Mac-related reviews of everything from the Mac OS X to Mac-compatible Web cams.

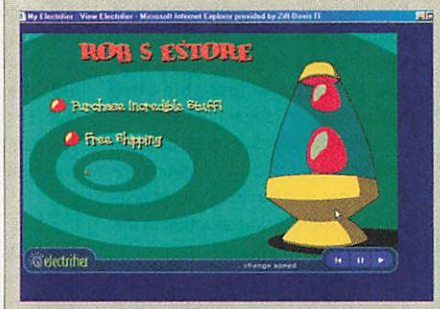
QUICKTIPS

TALES OF ENCRYPTION

Yahoo! Mail is offering a way for its users to encrypt e-mail messages. Simply check the box "Send via free SecureDelivery.com," which appears beneath the cc: field on the e-mail composition screen. Another clever way to encrypt is through **SPAM MIMIC [spammimic.com]**. This free, Web-based service actually encodes messages as spam (i.e., the unsolicited junk mail you receive in your in-box). Recipients can decode your e-mail by cutting and pasting it into the Spam Mimic site and clicking Decode.

GETTING THE DIGITS

In order to play countless online games and use many programs (such as telephony software), you need to know your IP number. Also known as an Internet Protocol address, it's a series of four digits assigned to your computer by your ISP that allows other computers to identify you online. To determine your IP address, click Start/Run and type WINIPCFG. This will launch the IP Configuration window, and you'll see your IP number next to the heading IP Address.



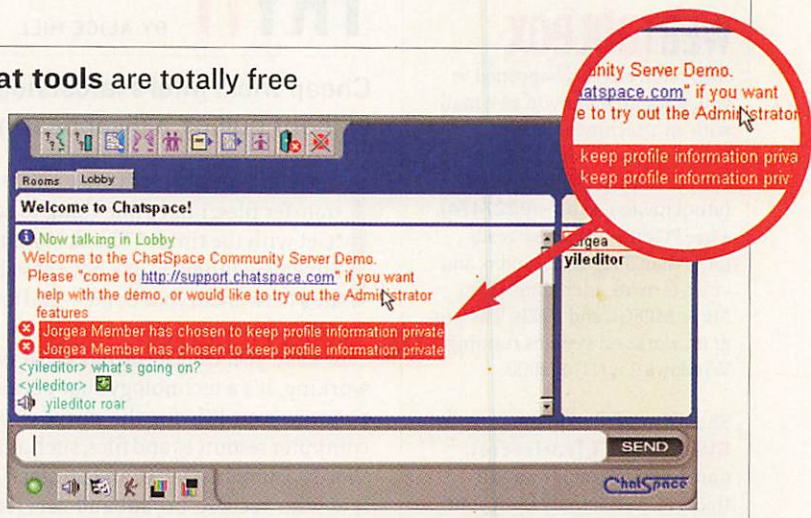
ANIMATIONS IN A FLASH

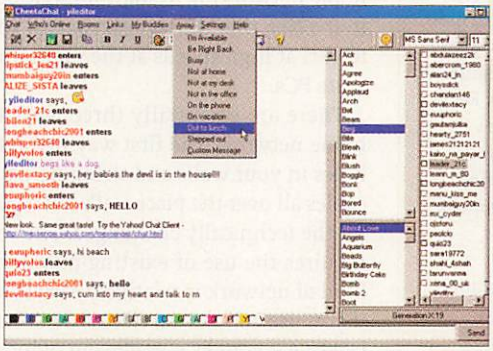
At **ELECTRIFIER [electrifier.com]**, anyone can create free Flash animations without any programming know-how. To get started, click on one of the site's eight Flash templates and choose a Flash theme, such as Groovy or High Tech. Next, enter text and upload images to the site to customize your animation. When you're finished, Electrifier will provide you with HTML code that you can cut and paste into your site.

LEARNIT

BY LOU DOLINAR

Talk may be cheap, but these **powerful chat tools** are totally free





BIG TALK (clockwise from far left): Odigo's instant-messaging app welcomes AIM and ICQ users; surfers can add chatrooms to sites using ChatSpace; CheetaChat, the great cat of chat.

.01 TALK AMONGST YOURSELVES

If you've heard that AOL Instant Messenger users can gab only with other AIM users, you've heard wrong. **IMICI MESSENGER [imici.com]**, a little-known IM program, lets you gab with AIM, MSN, Yahoo!, and ICQ chatters. Another instant-messaging program, called **THE ODIGO MESSENGER [odigo.com]**, also connects you to various IM systems, and the program can fetch Web-based e-mail and consolidate buddy lists, too. Odigo even lets you customize its look, proving the old saw, "There's more than one way to skin a chat." The only downside to these programs: You'll have to download patches for them now and then, since AOL tends to rewrite its instant-messaging software to block IM interlopers. Both programs are free, and require that your computer be running Windows 95, 98, NT, or Me. Imici also works on Linux systems, and offers a Web-based, Mac-friendly version of its instant-messaging software.

.02 POWER CHAT

Jazz up your IM experience with "chat clients," special programs that add powerful features to such services as Yahoo! Chat and Ichat. Perhaps the most popular and feature-rich chat client is **CHEETACHAT [cheetachat.com]**. It lets you create and send funky chat effects and transfer MP3 files to fellow instant messengers. It can also read chat text aloud. CheetaChat is free, and requires that your system be running Windows 95, 98, or NT.

.03 FREE ROOMS, NO HASSLE

If you've ever wanted to incorporate a chat feature into your Web site but didn't know how, click to **CHATSPACE [chatspace.com]**. This PC-only, Java-based chat server is easy to set up and free to use. It supports avatars, audio, video, and instant messaging. The software also comes with security features, as well as a "dirty word" filter.

.04 AGAINST THE FIREWALL

What, your instant-messaging or chat program of choice doesn't work at the office? You're not alone. Many corporations block access to external chat systems using firewall software. To get around this problem, you'll have to reconfigure your IM program's proxy server and firewall settings; you may also have to open specific ports on your router. Sound confusing? AIM users can work around the problem by using the service's Web-based client, **AIM EXPRESS [aol.com/aim/aimexpress.html]**.

Another option: Use a chat program that works within firewalls. Windows has a rudimentary utility called Winpopup; you can find it in C:\Windows. If you're looking for something more powerful, try the PC-only program Easy LAN Chat from **OPTIONS COMPUTER SOFTWARE [optionscomputer.com]**. It's free to try, $14.95 to buy.

WEBTOOLBOX

How often has this happened to you: A friend sends you an e-mail with an attachment labeled "Hilarious," but your PC can't open it. You need **IRFANVIEW** [studl.tuwien.ac.at/~e9227474], a free PC-only utility that reads more than 50 graphic, audio, and video formats, including AVIs, MP3s, MPEGs, and JPEGs. The program works on systems running Windows 9.x, NT, or 2000.

Thanks to a program called **SURFSECRET** [surfsecret.com], you can wipe away all traces of Web activity from your PC. The program is particularly useful to people who want to hide their surfing habits from employers or spouses. SurfSecret regularly sweeps away history, temp, Recycle Bin, cookie, and Internet cache files. It can also eradicate the history of the Run and Find menus, as well as the list of most-recently opened documents, which is viewable under Start/Documents. The program is free to try and $39.99 to buy.

Want to change the look of Windows' lackluster frames, borders, title bars, and buttons? **WINDOWBLINDS** [stardock.com] gives you nearly complete control over your operating system's graphical user interface and lets you create new window designs. While the program does not require any special programming skills on your part, it does take some effort to master. For the less ambitious, the company Web site provides loads of precooked skins to choose from. The PC-only utility is free to try and $19.95 to buy.

TRYIT

BY ALICE HILL

Cheap trick: Intel's latest home network performs **wireless acts of magic** without pulling a disappearing act on your wallet

IF YOU STILL RELY ON FLOPPY OR ZIP DISKS TO transfer files, I have one thing to say to you: "Get with the times." Thanks to some innovative new products, it's now possible to create a network in your home—and for less than the cost of a good printer.

In case you're unfamiliar with home networking, it's a technology that permits you to connect your PCs for the purpose of sharing computer resources and files, such as Microsoft Word documents, MP3s, and printers. The lucky few who receive broadband service can use home networking to share a single connection to the Net; this allows everyone in your family to surf at high speeds at the same time on separate PCs.

There are essentially three ways to build a home network. The first way involves drilling holes in your walls and stringing up unsightly cables all over the place—it's not a good choice for the technically challenged. The second way requires the use of existing phone lines. This kind of network is relatively easy to set up, but if you use cellular service or don't have phone jacks near your PCs, you're out of luck.

The last option involves the use of wireless networking technology. Before you let the term *wireless network* scare you off, let me assure you that this is not rocket science—I swear on my old Commodore 64's grave. I recently received the new AnyPoint Wireless from **INTEL ANYPOINT HOME NETWORK** [anypoint.com], and it took less than an hour to set up. Each kit ($79) comes with a single transceiver, a coffee cup–size device that you attach to your computer's USB port. You'll need to attach one transceiver to each computer in your home. You'll also need to install software on each PC to let the transceivers "talk" to one another. That's it: No cables or phone lines needed.

Expanding the network is a snap, too. For each new computer you want to add, you simply attach a new transceiver. Even laptops can join in, thanks to a PC Card version of the product ($129). Each transceiver can send and receive data, through walls and floors, as far as 150 feet. And since the transceiver is an external device, I can easily move it to a new computer whenever I phase out an older system.

Still, the AnyPoint Wireless Home Network has its speed limits. It isn't nearly as fast as an Ethernet network, which can send and receive data at speeds approaching 100Mbps. AnyPoint transceivers send and receive data at 1.6Mbps.

SHARING AND CARING: Connect home PCs for group Net access with the AnyPoint Wireless Home Network.

What it lacks in speed, however, the AnyPoint Wireless Home Network makes up for in ease of use. Once the network is up and running, it's simple to manage and customize its settings. You can, say, restrict your teens from using the Net on their bedroom PCs, or limit the number of computers that get access to the ink-jet printer. The AnyPoint Wireless Home Network also comes with a firewall that protects your computers from hackers; it's simple to change its levels of security, which range from Trusting to Paranoid.

While the AnyPoint Wireless Home Network will be plenty fast for most surfers, I should warn you that it's not good for sharing colossal video or graphics files. But in my home, it's more than adequate for sharing files and browsing the Web from my sundry computers. And now I can finally rid myself of the hundreds of floppies scattered throughout the house. Any takers?

BUYIT? When All Is Said and Done...

Of all the ways to build a home network, Intel's AnyPoint Wireless Home Network may be the simplest. It doesn't require the use of cables or Ethernet cards. However, it can transmit data only at 1.6Mbps, which may be far too slow for power users.

SEARCHALERT

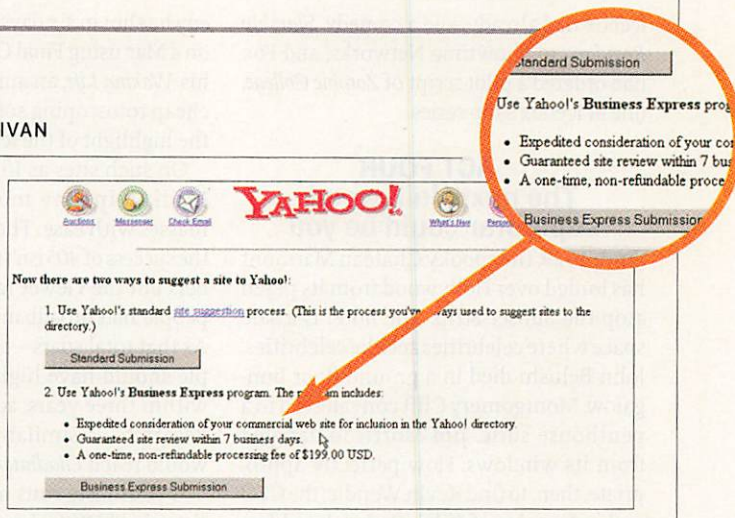
BY DANNY SULLIVAN

Submit to submission fees: How to **pay your way** into search engines

IT USED TO BE YOU COULD SUBMIT YOUR SITE TO A SEARCH ENGINE at no cost. Oh, how times have changed. ■ **YAHOO! BUSINESS EXPRESS HELP** [help.yahoo.com/help/bizex] and **LOOKSMART: SUBMIT A SITE** [submit.looksmart.com] charge businesses a onetime, nonrefundable submission fee ($199) for listings in their directories. **NBCI** [nbci.com] offers an optional fee-based submit program as well; for $99 your site will be "reviewed for promotion" from its general directory to its Top Site Directory, which appears at the beginning of search results.

However, paying a fee to these directories doesn't guarantee that your site will appear at the top of search results. In fact, it doesn't mean your site will get listed at all. The fee simply ensures that an editor will promptly review your site and determine whether it *should* be listed in the directory. Sure, it sounds chancy to pay for an opportunity to have your business listed, but I've found that the vast majority of sites do pass muster. Should you be rejected, you can appeal the decision (except at NBCi). Also, the directories may require you make changes to your site before they list it.

What about search engines? Inktomi, a service that powers some of the largest search engines on the Net, has a "paid inclusion" program, at **INKTOMI SEARCH/SUBMIT** [inktomi.com/products/portal/search/pagesubmission.html] that ensures your home page is added to its listings within two days of submission. The service costs $20 for the first URL, $10 per URL thereafter, and $6 per URL for any beyond the first 100. For now, business sites submitted to LookSmart are automatically listed in the AltaVista Directory, as well as the directory listings at Excite, MSN, CNN, and iWon. Fortunately, it still costs nothing to submit a page to AltaVista's Search Index; just click on the site's Submit a Site link, which appears at the bottom of **ALTAVISTA** [altavista.com].



LIST PRICE: Business sites can expedite their Yahoo! site reviews for $199.

SURFGURU

Sending **self-destructing e-mail**; clocking your connection speed

I've heard there's such a thing as self-destructing e-mail, which deletes itself after it's been read. Is this true?

It sounds like something straight out of *Missive: Impossible*, but new technologies will command your e-mail to self-destruct in five seconds. Disappearing E-mail, a Microsoft Outlook plug-in from **DISAPPEARING INC.** [www.disappearing.com], adds this feature right into your mail client. The program works with systems running Windows 95, 98, NT, or 2000; it's free to try for 90 days and $100 to buy. Another program, called **SAFEMESSAGE** [safemessage.com], also lets you send self-destructing e-mail; it's geared toward businesses looking to shore up computer security.

SEE THE **SURF GURU** AT **WWW.SURF-GURU.COM** DAILY AND ON TECHTV'S *INTERNET TONIGHT*.

Unlike Disappearing E-mail, which stores your messages on a secure mail server, SafeMessage employs peer-to-peer technology. In other words, it lets you send encrypted messages directly from your out-box to your recipient's in-box. SafeMessage is easy to use, but messages can be sent only to other registered users. It requires that your system be running Windows 95, 98, NT, or 2000 and costs $700 per year for five licenses. Of course, these programs cannot stop recipients from preserving the contents of your e-mail in a digital photo or screen grab.

My broadband connection seems sluggish. Is there a way to clock my connection speed?

The easiest way to check your connection speed is by taking the bandwidth speed test at **MSN: COMPUTING CENTRAL BROADBAND** [computingcentral.msn.com/internet/broadband]. You don't have to download anything; simply click to the site and wait for the test results. Also check in at the **DSL REPORTS: BROADBAND TESTS AND TOOLS** [dslreports.com/tools], which likewise can test the performance of your line speed.

AOLWATCH

If you use AOL Instant Messenger, you may be in danger of losing your screen name to hackers. A vulnerability in the application allows others to steal your identity by registering a version of it with the first two letters missing. For example, if your screen name were *John Smith*, someone could steal it by registering *hn Smith*. The best way to protect your screen name: Register the name hackers would use to steal it.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID BUTLER

Icebox had already sold a comedy, *Starship Regulars*, to Showtime Networks, and Fox had ordered a pilot script of *Zombie College*, one of Icebox's top series.

ACT FOUR
The next Hollywood superstar could be you

Since 1929, the spooky Chateau Marmont has lorded over Hollywood from its perch atop the Sunset Strip. The hotel is a safe space where celebrities act like celebrities. John Belushi died in a ground-floor bungalow. Montgomery Clift convalesced in a penthouse suite. Jim Morrison dangled from its windows. How perfectly appropriate, then, to find Kevin Wendle, the CEO and cofounder of Ifilm, eating breakfast and discussing the next great film prodigy: you. "We're about to see the explosion of the home director-producer," says Wendle, who also cofounded CNET and is an executive founding member of the Fox Television Network. "Overnight successes will be made—that's the power of the Internet."

Wendle has already created such a success. Last summer, Bruce Branit and Jeremy Hunt finished a three-minute short film, *405*, about an airplane that makes an emergency landing on a Los Angeles freeway. Total budget: $300 (including a $75 traffic ticket). It was posted on Ifilm, and in less than a year, almost 3 million people have downloaded it; only MediaTrip.com's short comedy *George Lucas in Love* has even approached those numbers. The partners were bombarded by offers, got representation from the Creative Artists Agency, and quit their day jobs.

Even two years ago this would not have been possible. With talent, you can become a rock star with a $200 guitar; a writer, with a beat-up typewriter. But given the expensive equipment and know-how needed to make a film—and the connections to get it shown—Hollywood has always been an insider's game. No longer. Branit and Hunt used a digital video camera, which can be had for $3,000, and edited the film on their home computer. At Sundance this year, more than 40 percent of the festival submissions were shot in DV.

"It opens up filmmaking as much as acrylics opened up painting," says Richard Linklater, director of *Slacker* and *Dazed and Confused*, as he sits in his modest hotel room above Sundance headquarters. In less than three hours, he would unveil *Tape*, an Ethan Hawke–Uma Thurman psychological comedy he shot in six days using DV and edited on a Mac using Final Cut Pro software. And his *Waking Life*, an animated feature using cheap rotoscoping software, was arguably the highlight of the festival.

On such sites as Ifilm, AtomFilms, and MediaTrip, any movie can reach the masses with ease. The amazing fact about the success of *405* isn't the total viewer numbers but the viewer rate: about half of the people had broadband access at the time. As that total soars—some 27 million people should have high-speed connections within three years, according to Forrester Research—a similar kind of penetration would reach *Gladiator*-type numbers.

If your taste runs more toward *Temptation Island*, DV technology and broadband connections allow people to turn their lives into unedited, uncensored versions of *The Real World*. At **CAMERAPLANET.COM**, you can watch surprisingly gripping footage of an angry protester chaining himself to a McDonald's counter in an attempt to shut the restaurant down. At **Z.COM**, the entrepreneurial and highly popular *Dare for Dollars* features people eating dog food and digging through manure for cash and prizes. None of this is beyond the capabilities of a high school cameraman, and all of it has a chance to be a hit. And like the guys of *405*, these hits will transcend the Internet. At Sundance, David von Ancken was awarded a $1 million deal from Universal after winning a Hypnotic online short film contest. "People who are developing a loyal audience on the Internet," says Doug Liman, the director of *Swingers* and the upcoming *The Bourne Identity*, "will carry that into television and film."

ACT FIVE
You have the director's ear

The Net is doing more than democratizing Hollywood for the filmmaker—it's also democratizing it for the fan. Much was made about the success of *The Blair Witch Project*, shot on DV and marketed brilliantly on the Web. The next step will see the public actively affecting a movie *before* it hits theaters. Rather than just act as a public relations mouthpiece, the Web will let you whisper into the director's ear.

This process has already started with casting. For his new movie *Tomcats*, former Disney studio chief Joe Roth used MediaTrip to hold an online call for four extras, resulting in 30 pictures and postings. MediaTrip visitors then cast 3 million votes to pick the winners. Directors like Jon Favreau have begun taking it further, using the Net as a proxy for the public at large. When he considers an actor, he'll search for how many fan sites that actor has and what random people say about him on message boards.

Favreau also uses the Internet as a sounding board. For next month's *Made*—a mob flick he wrote, directed, and starred in alongside Vaughn, Puff Daddy, Famke Janssen, and Peter Falk—Favreau launched **MADE**, which not only detailed the plot and the trailer but also included a bulletin board where people can voice their opinions. Robert Rodriguez says that for *Spy Kids 2*, he'll post actual scenes on the Web months in advance to create buzz and get some feedback. "A lot of times," Rodriguez says, "the only reason you make a movie is to see people's reaction."

AtomFilms goes so far as to let users choose which films get produced in the first place. In October, it began sponsoring *Animation Showdown*, where five pilot episodes submitted by aspiring directors are posted monthly on the site. Almost 100,000 users a month have been voting for their favorite. The winner gets a 10-episode contract. The interactivity is fun, but there's something larger going on here: As with the casting of *Tomcats*, by letting the audience actually pick which show gets made, AtomFilms is vesting its audience in the show's success.

Another form of online cinematic democracy could be found in **PROJECT GREENLIGHT**. Produced by Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Chris Moore, Miramax, HBO, and LivePlanet, Greenlight hosted a screenwriting contest, and the site's online community of aspiring writers and filmmakers whittled more than 7,000 submissions down to 10 finalists. In March, one lucky winner received a $1 million production budget to direct a film, which Miramax is committed to releasing in theaters next year.

Such democracy is what the Net is about. And the companies and individuals that respond accordingly stand a good chance of succeeding in the coming era. Much of the chatter at Sundance was filled with concern, even panic. But like every medium of the past century, the Internet will provide a tool that, used wisely, will only make Hollywood stronger in the end. "I'm so excited about the future," says Rodriguez, "I can hardly sleep anymore."

RANDALL LANE *is the former editor in chief of* P.O.V. *and has written for* Forbes.

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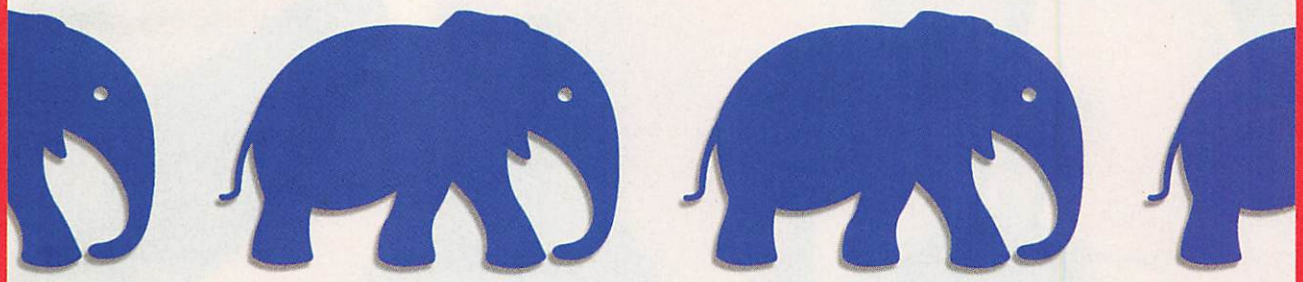

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THE WEIRD AND THE WACKY ON THE INTERNET BY SCOTT ALEXANDER

Pictograms

SIGNS ARE WONDERFUL INVENTIONS. THEY CAN inform (MEN'S), they can warn (MERGE AHEAD), and they can plead (CALL AGAIN SOON). If you've been having trouble finding a sign for your unique situation, check in with Pictograms before giving up hope. You'll find such classics as THANK YOU FOR URINATING ON THE MIMES alongside newer fare, such as DO NOT TAUNT THE OCTOPUS and the always helpful PLEASE DO NOT BEAT THE TELEVISION WITH YOUR FACE. You'll even find some in French: *"Ne vous glissez pas sur le vomi des clowns"* ("Don't slip on the clown vomit"). [home.swbell.net/pyg343/pictos]

The Orphanage of Cast-Off Mascots

TONY THE TIGER. LUCKY THE LEPRECHAUN. Toucan Sam. They're like family—we give them love, they give us hypoglycemia and rotting teeth. But what about less fortunate product mascots like Kwik and Eezy, the dishwashing-soap twins (whose names only hint at the tawdry depths to which they have sunk)? The public has turned its back, and these unlucky former shills need your help. But choose carefully: Do you prefer Mr. Coffee Nerves, or Cudahy Curly, the pig who loves noshing on his own kind? [lileks.com/institute/orphanage]

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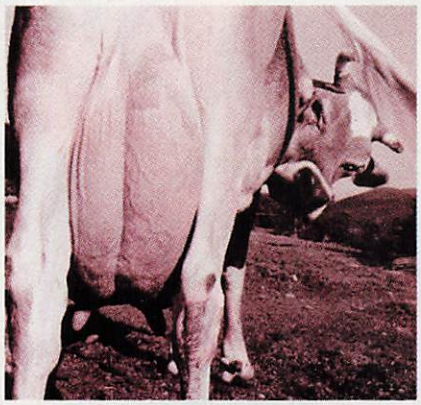
Playcow

WE KNOW, WE KNOW—NO ONE READS *Playcow* just for the articles: such gripping fare as a profile of the Spice Cows and coverage of the latest in bovine space travel. Then, of course, there are the pics that brought you in the door, the ones of Jenny McCowthy with her 159-139-149 measurements (turnoffs: flukeworms and cow-tippers) and Pamoola Anderson (who aspires to *Haywatch* fame). Just don't leave your copy lying around where the calves might find it. [members.tripod.com/~JBarton]



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The Sumo Wrestlers Dressed Up as the Senshi

SUMO WRESTLING IS PRETTY ODD TO BEGIN WITH. Once you start adding novelties to the mix, you could end up with something so strange it rips the very fabric of space-time. So you can imagine our concern for the safety of humankind when we ran across a page featuring sumo wrestlers dressed up like (and wrestling as) the disgustingly cute characters from the animated series *Sailor Moon*. Sure, you say, this is kids' stuff compared with the antics of our own beloved professional wrestlers, but we feel that a redneck in a feather boa can't compete with the fear inspired by a 400-pound little girl as she stomps toward you. And just think how fast the action figures and Dream Castle playsets would sell. [www.os.xaxon.ne.jp/~rini/sailor/sumo]

PICTOGRAM: TRAVIS DOGGETT AND JEAN-PAUL LEBRETON; COW: JOHN WILLIS/IMAGE BANK; SUMO WRESTLER: AFP/CORBIS; *SAILOR MOON* GRAPHICS (SUMO HEADDRESS, BOW TIE): COURTESY OF THE CARTOON NETWORK

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